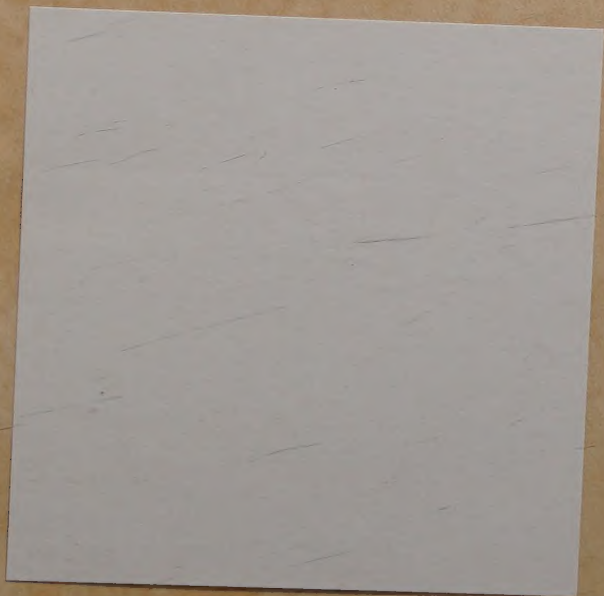


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IN THE STEPS OF BUNYAN'S
PILGRIM

AND

Sketch of Bunyan's Life



JOHN BUNYAN.

From a Drawing by Robert White (1645-1703).

IN THE STEPS OF BUNYAN'S PILGRIM

AND

Sketch of Bunyan's Life

BY

THOMAS DUNLOP

OF EMMANUEL CHURCH, BOOTLE, LIVERPOOL

EDITED BY J. E. H. THOMSON, D.D., EDINBURGH

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PREFATORY NOTE

When a child reads the "Pilgrim's Progress" he is enchanted with the story, and turns a deaf ear to any explanation of it as an allegory; some muddy pond within reach is secretly regarded as "the Slough of Despond," and any castellated building that from a distance looks gloomy and forbidding becomes "Doubting Castle." When the years of discretion have arrived, and that child has become a man, and when with the full sense of it being an allegory he resumes perusal of the "Pilgrim's Progress," he feels it a searching book, and one fitted to afford much spiritual benefit, but the necessity of adjusting spiritual facts to the allegorical symbol is a distraction and a hindrance.

The reader feels that it would be a vast advantage were some one to unwrap for him the swathings of allegory that he may at once enjoy the truth within. Many have attempted to meet this need, but the result has not infrequently been so repulsively dry that it did not appeal to the audience for whom it was intended,

and so failed of its object. One would not be much appetised who had presented to him, instead of a basket of luscious fruit, a cupful or two of dry powder, the net nutritive elements which had been contained in it.

The present set of Lectures, although considerably condensed from their original form, cannot lie under this condemnation, as they have proved acceptable to several different audiences ; and it is at the request of not a few who formed part of these that they have been published. The character of the author's mind peculiarly fitted him for the work of interpreting Bunyan ; on the one hand there was profound spirituality, on the other there was a fancy that naturally expressed itself in allegory. It was, moreover, a task that he engaged in *con amore*. The last literary work with which he was occupied was finishing these Lectures for the Periodic Press. It is therefore with the hope that it will spread more widely the benefit those who heard them received that they are now given to the general public.

J. E. H. T.

SKETCH OF BUNYAN'S LIFE

June 14, 1645.—“ John Bunyan I believe is this night in Leicester, not yet writing his ‘ Pilgrim’s Progress ’ on paper, but acting it on the face of the earth with a brown matchlock on his shoulder. Or rather, *without* the matchlock, just at present ; Leicester and he having been taken the other day.”—*Carlyle*.

A very interesting peep at Bunyan this, which I got the other day in a book which I happened to take up, and in a footnote on a page at which I happened to glance. John was at this time a raw lad of 17 or 18. If we are to believe reports, he was a very raw soldier too, for we are told that a few days after this, when he was drawn as one of a storming party who were to retake the city, a sturdy, active fellow stepped forward and took his place, judging no doubt that the young tinker would serve the expedition much better by being absent from it. It is likely Bunyan swore a good deal at the fellow for his impertinence, but shortly afterwards, when the man, while doing sentinel duty in place of Bunyan, was shot dead with a musket bullet, the same bullet made a mark on Bunyan’s conscience, not

very serious at first, but serious afterwards and never to be effaced.

At this time Charles I. is fighting his Parliament (when we get a glimpse of Bunyan, the brown matchlock on his shoulder and losing his chances of being killed), the haughty, intolerant king wants more power in his royal hands : the Parliament will not yield it. Armies are raised on either side, and civil war rages. Oliver Cromwell is about 45 years of age and Lieutenant-General of the Horse on the Parliamentary side. John Milton, aged 33, is not yet secretary to the Protector, not yet wielding his pen in political affairs as effectively as Cromwell wields his sword, he is living at present as a private gentleman, and has just got over that greatest of all domestic afflictions, marriage with an unsuitable wife. She loved dancing and genial light-mindedness as much as he loved study ; could not endure his gravity and his poems, left him some while ago, and has just returned in tears of repentance, and in great fear, lest some other, as report has it, should occupy her vacant place. In about 20 years hence " *Paradise Lost* " will be forthcoming. In about the same lapse of time the " *Pilgrim's Progress* " will have emerged from the brain of this young military apprentice. At present he is " acting it on the face of the earth," in the neighbourhood of Leicester, helping the Parliament to beat the king, if such help as the raw soldier could give might not be better named.

Bunyan's military career seems to have been very short. How or why it came to an end nobody seems

to know, but we soon find the Parliamentary army marching and counter-marching in other parts of England, and John Bunyan in his native village, with his tinker's apron on, no better than he was, but rather more profane and riotous as he led the rude sports and games on the village green. Of Bunyan's youth there is not much to say but what may be said of almost every young pilgrim at the outset of his journey through the wilderness of this world. Everyone's childhood and youth are much alike. When maturity comes, the fruit comes good or bad. Till one is grown up and fairly tested by face to face conflict with the realities of existence, you can scarcely tell whether he has in him the elements of a wise man or a fool. One's birthplace, and parentage, and social position, have very little to do with it. King David of Israel would have shewn himself a royal soul among men, even though he had never been taken from the sheep cotes. John Bunyan, too, would have been a king of men, born and reared anywhere and in any circumstances. A feeble man bends to circumstances, is a slave of them; a good man is lord over them, or if they will not yield to him, he contrives to make their strength his own. But great and small men, like great and small plants, are much alike until they have grown up sufficiently to shew the inherent power or weakness with which by nature they have been gifted.

Elstow, within a mile of Bedford, was the place of Bunyan's birth (1628). His father was a tinker by trade and apparently of a gipsy race. A decent respectable

man for his class, who sent his son John to school, and afterwards taught him to win his bread by his own handicraft. John tells us he soon forgot what little he learned at school. As he grew up he was like other boys of his class, full of fun and mischief, and fell in too readily with the habits of cursing, lying, and blaspheming the name of God which were common in these days to old and young, high and low. He tells us that when a youth he was a great sin-breeder. Probably a worse name than any who knew him would have given him. Bunyan knew his own heart better than any other did, and in judging of himself he speaks with a knowledge that no other human being possessed. The vileness of which he often speaks as belonging to him was a vileness of the heart more than of his conduct. Overlooking this, many conclude from his own confessions that he was in his life a most abandoned and profligate wretch, the lowest of the low, and vilest of the vile. This is not a fair way of judging, any more than it would be to conclude that because Paul called himself the chief of sinners that there was no one breathing in the world at the time so deep sunk in vice and wickedness. Bunyan was better outwardly than most young men of his class. He abhorred, and kept himself clean from some of their common vices; but knowing the depravity of his heart so well, he did not take credit to himself as being better than others. Again, there are some on the other hand, who explain away Bunyan's self-reproachful and condemnatory language as resulting from religious fervour with more heat than

knowledge, and an imagination that exercised despotic power over his body and mind. They say that he read the Bible like a fool because he allowed himself to be comforted by one passage in it, and to be alarmed by another. His great sinfulness existed nowhere but in the wild fancies of his brain ; and that it was only a sign of his being in weak health of body or mind, when his condition as a sinner before God gave him any great concern.

This is as great an error as the other. Bunyan's imagination certainly did often lead him to wild conclusions ; but it was a clear apprehension of the truth that set his imagination on fire. If one have feeble convictions of the reality both of God and of sin, in his soul he will not be likely to call himself bad names. Let these convictions be clear and strong, and no names will appear too bad to tell the truth concerning him. You must picture Bunyan in your mind as a little boy, with reddish hair, playing with his father's tools, making more noise in mischief than his father did in business, with the unfinished tin cans and other trumpery spread over the tinker's floor in his humble dwelling at Elstow, near Bedford. Had you seen into the father's sober mind, you would have noticed a thought pass often through like this : That child of mine needs tinkering under better hands than mine ; God bless thee, son John, and mend thee, and make thee a vessel unto honour and meet for thy Master's use !

Years after saw John, grown older but no wiser or better, leading the riotous boys on the village green,

swearing dreadfully, as other low-bred boys, and high bred countrymen, of the time did—a lad in good vigorous health and high spirits, caring little for school instruction, and getting it rather scantily ; then learning his father's business, carrying the mended articles to their respective abodes, or conveying such as were in broken health to the hospital of his father's house, on the way relieving the monotony of existence by throwing stones, crippling a few poor dogs for life, breaking windows, or engaging in battle with any other youth who would be friendly enough to fight with him. Had you seen the young apprentice soldering a favourite pan of old maiden lady Pernickety, in her house, she waiting patiently to make her gruel in it, and the young rogue rushing out now and then to set two dogs by the ears, or witness a cock fight in the street, you would not have wondered that she held out, as people generally did, no hope for him in this world or in the world to come !

Safely back at his trade in his native village he is not long there till he marries, being 19 years of age, his wife's portion being good health, good sense, God's love in her heart, and two good books in her hand. Love and poverty came in at their house door, hand in hand, and seem to have agreed remarkably well together. Poverty or any other human ill, on a man's part, is easy to bear, if he has a sober-minded, loving woman to bear it with him. This young Bunyan had. Between them they had not when they began their married life so much even as a dish or a spoon. Sober people of the time who took interest in the young tinker's wellbeing, no doubt

shook their heads, and said it was the biggest step to ruin he had ever yet taken. It was a great step in the opposite direction. His wife was truly a treasure to him, rich in gentleness, patience, affectionateness. No man can be wicked if such a wife woos him from it. If this world's affairs are chronicled by the author of evil, Bunyan's marriage will be registered in the black books of Beelzebub as "a melancholy occurrence." The old enemy of souls did not like it. It was not till after his marriage that Bunyan had very serious agonies in spirit over sin. What did his young wife do? She put her hand on his shoulder, and one of her good books in his hand, and said, "Now, John, like a good lad, read a bit, it will do us good." And if John cast away the book from him pettishly, saying, "You know, Mary, I can't read and I won't read," she would put both her gentle hands on his brown hair, and say, "Well, John, be patient and I'll teach you." And so, seating him on the only chair they had, replacing the book in his hands, and bending over the chair back, with her fair cheek not far from his, thus the reading began, and the wild youth was tamed gradually. She was the daughter of a pious man, deceased—good men have usually good daughters—and often spoke of her father's godly words and ways. No doubt she looked after John's body as well as his soul, mending his clothes as neatly as a woman could, and making his meals as attractive as a little money would allow, with the disadvantage for a while at first of supping alternately with her husband out of a borrowed dish and with a borrowed spoon. Such a

companion was the last Satan would have chosen for him ; and we find his assaults upon the youth whom he was now afraid of losing, beginning henceforth to be desperately severe.

You must not think, however, that Bunyan was reformed all at once upon his marriage. No. Inwardly there was more light, not reformation. Outwardly there was more propriety in his conduct. The Ethiopian put on a lighter skin, and the leopard only looked a little more lamblike, wanting some of his spots. Not so openly profane, he became more of a formalist in religion. Asked his father one day if they belonged to the seed of Abram according to the flesh, hoping it was so, that he might not have any trouble in getting into the kingdom of heaven. His father said No, and the question was never raised again. He attended church, but still played at the old games on Sabbath afternoon, or helped to ring the bells that summoned the gamesters together. Conscience began to be very tender. Sometimes spoke so loud as to be heard like a voice from heaven. This happened one Sabbath after hearing a sermon against Sabbath-breaking. He was distressed all the way home. He tells us humorously that he forgot it all during dinner (proving that his wife was a good cook, as well as a good woman), went out to his sport, and in the middle of it was stunned by what he imagined a voice from heaven.

He was of a very tender conscience, and yet desperately greedy of sin. To deny himself of it was like taking a bone from a hungry dog. One day at a

neighbour's shop window he fell into a fit of swearing, whereupon the woman who owned the shop (whom he calls a godless wretch) came out, and denounced him, saying that his bad language made her tremble. This cured him of that swearing fit, and he never had another.

From a poor man who read his Bible, and whom Bunyan met about this time, he derived an impulse in the way of Bible reading, taking chiefly, however, to the historical parts, which shewed in him more of intellectual interest than of heart hunger for Divine truth. Weaned about this time from some vicious company and vicious things; nevertheless he styles himself then a "painted hypocrite." The same man who led him to read the Bible fell into great anti-Christian error, and the circumstance gave a great shock to Bunyan's unstable faith. Then we come to the time when he overheard the pious women talking, while he was tinkering near them in the streets of Bedford. Their talk was of the "new birth." It opened to him a new world, not of dreamland but of reality. As yet he only heard of it, did not see or realise it. But there were people of flesh and blood living in it, and apparently enjoying it amazingly. They seemed to him indeed a peculiar people, dwelling alone, and from them his mind received its first impressions of a decidedly saving character. To Bunyan the piety of these women savours sweetly. He talks with them, and likes them better. He leaves the parish church and attends their meeting house. They belong to a small Baptist congregation in Bedford of which John Gifford is pastor, a "new

birth " man likewise, who had been an officer in the Royalist army, then a prisoner, escaped only to be enslaved by the sin of gambling, and one day, having lost a large sum of money, his soul was roused in fury against God, as if He was to blame for it ; was awe-struck by a passage in a book which he chanced to open at the moment, inviting the vilest wretch living to come to Christ, and by this means was made a new man.

Pastor Gifford and his people gave Bunyan new eyes for Bible reading. He now likes Paul's epistles, which formerly he could not read. John is awaking to the knowledge of the truth as it is in himself and as it is in Jesus. With more light comes more heart agony over sin. The warfare is begun which in that man's soul will go increasingly for five or six years. Bunyan is a soldier again, battling with himself, or rather against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world. You have the conflict related in detail in his " Grace Abounding " literally, and figuratively in his " Pilgrim's Progress " and " Holy War." The mental torture, the heart agonies through which he passed, can hardly be described even by his own pen. Was it not worth his while to endure it all if through his sufferings he was to be made a prince of dreamers, and an inspired epistle of Christ in every language under heaven, known and read of all men ? When Satan bound him with strong cords, and tempted him with many deceits, he was working unwittingly, but very mightily, for the furtherance of the Gospel. You say, had John Bunyan known that at the time he would

have been greatly helped. No ; in that case there would have been no trial of his faith at all, which is much more precious than of gold that perisheth.

Bunyan struggles after peace, an assured state of salvation. Pastor Gifford has it, and many of his flock. Is the poor tinker too poor or too vile to get it ? They encourage him as they can, sometimes with effect, more often with none. He feels as if he were on one side of a stone wall, the cold, lonely outside, and they on the other side, the comfortable inside. But in a vision, or reverie, he sees a narrow gap, through which with difficulty he first gets his head, then his shoulders, then his whole frame : it is a strait gate, it is Christ, but he has got through. For a while this gladdens him.

Then the doctrine of election arises to trouble him, falls into deep despondency at the thought of being non-elect, and is about to give up all his hopes, when some comforting passage, as " yet there is room," occurs to his mind, and relieves it for a time. He is not yet a new man ; has entered the strait gate only in vision. But he is " all on a flame " to be converted. Evermore light comes, evermore sin discovered in him. Impressed one day with a sermon on the text, " My love," from the Song of Songs, he is so overpoweringly glad at the love of Christ to him, that he can scarce forbear speaking of it to the very crows in the fields on his way home.

Questionings soon come again, worse than ever. He has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost ; or is ready to do so. Feels a strange inward impulse to commit that unpardonable sin of the tongue, so much

so indeed that he will often put his hand under his chin, and hold his mouth shut desperately lest the blasphemy should issue from it.

At length Bunyan comes into a more settled state of mind. Luther's "Commentary on Galatians" seems to have been the means of bringing his conversion thoroughly to an accomplishment. That book he felt as if written out of his heart. Then Pastor Gifford baptises him by immersion in the River Ouse, Bunyan being then 25 years of age. No sooner has Bunyan found Christ than he is tempted to sell Him. This is the devil's final effort to draw away our dreamer before letting him go on with ordinary comfort in the narrow way where his feet are now set. These words "sell Him" are repeated constantly and with increasing vehemence in his soul, as if the tempter had a real seat there, and an audible voice to speak to him with. He refuses as often as the appeal is made to him, till one morning in bed he seems to himself to say, "Let Him go if He will," whereupon he tells us he fell down into despair like as a bird shot dead drops from a tree. And rising from bed he wanders out into the fields as miserable a being as this world has ever seen. How precious must the Saviour have been to Bunyan at this time, when the fancied loss of Him gave so much distress! For a time he is fearfully disordered both in body and mind—fancies himself another Judas, and another Esau, has sold his Saviour, and can find no place of repentance. Then there seems to be a desperate contest between the consolatory and condemnatory passages of Scrip-

ture, which of the two shall hold possession of his mind. Sometimes the one, and sometimes the other holds him, but not long any of them till the other has him back again; and between the two he is in sad perplexity. More seldom with a glad face; generally in terror lest the stones should start out of the pavement and beat him to death, or the tiles dash themselves on his head from the roofs of the houses. Amazed that the pure sun should continue to give him light, and the fresh air breath. At last from this well of joy he gets a refreshment of permanent peace—"Him that cometh unto Me," &c.—and thinks he sees the source of all his soul's trouble in this, that he had prayed for assurance, but had not prayed to be kept from temptation.

When about 30 years of age we find Bunyan following at the same time his calling as a tinker, also working as a Christian evangelist. He has just come out of one prison, and is on his way to another, not so dismal. The dungeon of Doubting Castle has held him for many years, and the sufferings of that imprisonment were far beyond anything he endured afterwards in the prison of stone and lime on Bedford Bridge. To look in Bunyan's face now you would hardly recognise him to be the same man. The cloud is off his brow, the terror has left his eyes, the shadow of death passed from his face, health returns to his cheek, and the old pleasantry, new born and newly baptised into Christ, reappears at the corners of his mouth. The public eye has been on this man for a good while. He could no more be hid than a city set upon an hill. A man of his native inherent

mightiness could no more help being felt in the community, than the heat of Summer and the frost of Winter could come unfelt. He made his mark on the public mind as an irreligious youth—a deeper mark than others, not because he was worse than others, but because he had more power to make it than others had. He has made his mark also as an anxious enquirer after Divine truth, and now he is beginning, in the third place, to stamp himself upon the world as a heroic son of God.

For some years he has been a noted character in the streets of Bedford. And had you lived there then, some one would likely have asked you if you had never been to the little Baptist chapel where Bunyan had been reformed, and where you might see the rough tinker on a Sunday sitting and evidently deeply moved under the ministry of good old Mr. Gifford. Many people, we are told, were attracted to the chapel who, but for Bunyan, would never have known of its existence, some of them out of mere curiosity to see the man, and some in the hope of being partakers of the benefit which he had found there. When the pastor of the congregation—Mr. Gifford—died in 1657, they felt the want of their usual supply of the word of life, and urged Bunyan to “discover his gift amongst them,” which he did, he tells, in private, with much weakness and infirmity. Otherwise we learn it was with great power and acceptance. Soon a new pastor was settled over them—John Burton, who seems to have appreciated Bunyan very highly as a man of great Christian experience, and a great power in the way of making that experience useful

to others. So it came to pass that by both pastor and people Bunyan the tinker was pressed into a good deal of Christian work — more especially in the way of preaching—in Bedford and in the scattered villages around, where doubtless his temporal occupation often led him. For he still continued to work at his trade, in this way supporting himself, his wife, and his four children.

In his preaching at first, we are told, he lashed his hearers with the full rigours of the law. This might have been expected. He had felt these so painfully himself, and his wounds were scarcely yet healed. Afterwards, he preached more mildly and winningly, not less of Moses and the law than formerly, but more of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. At first it was Moses on Mount Sinai; afterwards, it was Moses and his company on the more genial Mount of Transfiguration. As might have been expected, scarcely does Bunyan begin public work as a Christian evangelist before he meets with that form of persecution which is the last and perhaps the most blessed of the Beatitudes, “persecution for righteousness’ sake.” Happily he did not enter into the “woe” of those whom all men speak well of. Bunyan’s sayings and doings attracted much attention, he was felt to be a formidable man, and some religious sects (for their name in these days, as now, was Legion), who did not understand him, or disagreed with him, began to oppose his preaching, and to utter calumnies against his character.

What is Bunyan doing this evening ? Outside the door of his house you do not hear the usual sounds of can and kettle mending. We saw him enter some good while ago, rather more hurriedly than usual, with muddy shoes, as if from a long journey through the byways of the country, and with the usual varieties of utensils about him, old and new, great and small. Perhaps he is too tired to work to-night ; or perhaps he is ill, and gone to bed. Entering we should find him well enough, and busy with a new occupation. Seated at a rude table, the big-boned man is trying to make his stiff fingers yield to the delicate art of writing. He blots his paper much, and his fingers much more ; but what does that matter to a man who has ideas in his head, and the cause of truth to serve ? Two boys have their elbows on the table, supporting their chins with their hands, and gazing with eager curiosity at their father's unaccustomed work, one little girl is playing on the floor, and another, with her hands on his knee, is looking, or trying to look with her blind eyes, not at the writing, but where she imagines her father's face to be, and behind the writer's chair, bending her head over his shoulder, is the mother of these children, the same meek, patient, loving woman, in much the same attitude as that in which we saw her years ago when she was coaxing her husband to undertake the heavy task of reading through her library of two religious books. He needs no coaxing now either to read or write, but he is much the better of her help both in spelling his words and in putting them down intelligibly upon paper. This is

Bunyan's first attempt at authorship—he is writing a book, the first of about threescore writings, greater or smaller, which he will leave upon this earth when he dies, some of them to live for ever, and some to do all the work they were meant to do, in a brief existence. This is one of such—a controversial treatise, which is to be issued against a party of Quakers, who have been saying hard things against his preaching and himself. By and by the pamphlet is published, it is the first shot in a paper war that continued for some time between Bunyan and the Quakers, wearying itself to death, and leaving Bunyan's enemies with more fear of him than ever, and not less hatred. Unable to answer his arguments, they begin to circulate evil reports of the worst kind against his moral character. You notice that his war against the gates of hell is not now carried on in his soul, more happily for him, only in society. Accordingly, we find him saying: “I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament, I rejoice in reproaches for Christ's sake.”

While these reproaches are being heaped upon him, his gentle helpmeet dies. He cannot well spare her at this time, and she herself would rather wait a little longer to share his troubles till they are overpast, to make his meals and mend his clothes for him, and help him to write and spell. What will become of him and his little children! There are wet eyes looking up from her dying bed, and wet eyes around it. Especially those two eyes that never saw her! Proud wife and happy mother! thy work is done—well done! Seen

many great changes on John, wrought not a few of them with thine own meek eyes and gentle hands, and words of love and tenderness. Sleep now, and take thy rest. Perhaps the tongue of slander did lie still while Bunyan wept over his dead wife, or at least until he returned from the funeral. Is it strange he does not say anything about her death in the record of his experience? Doubtless he had too much to say, too much tenderness of feeling to do it injury by attempting to put it into words.

Bunyan's wifeless and motherless house, left to the tender mercies of God, was not long left desolate. Another good woman, with perhaps greater capacity (for this was soon to be needed), was led by the hand of Providence to occupy the vacant place, and just in time to be of noble service, for John Bunyan's outward troubles of a political kind are beginning to be rather serious. Once, before Cromwell's death, during his free and liberal government, an attempt was made by a stupid or fanatical magistrate to put a violent end to Bunyan's preaching by bringing him to trial for it. The prosecution, however, was badly managed, as it deserved to be, and came to nothing.

Cromwell dies; and the tide of unrighteousness begins to return upon the land. Borne upon it comes the old throne, and the new king, Charles II., of infamous memory. You must go to the parish church, or go to prison. No dissenters are entitled to any privileges, unworthy of toleration. Let any man dare to preach, if profligate King Charles has not commissioned him,

and he must repent or die. There is a poor tinker called Bunyan, who does not use the king's book of Common Prayer, he is a peaceable subject of the realm, and his only fault is that he prays and preaches according to his own heart and conscience. He is reckoned a very dangerous man, the king's men get their eyes on him, watch him narrowly, and one day surround a private house, in a country district of Bedfordshire, where he is supposed to be holding a religious meeting. Sure enough he is there, with about 40 persons hearing him. He had been told of their intention to apprehend him, and had been advised to put off the meeting; no, he would not put off the meeting, nor flee from it. And now there he is at one end of the room, and the justice at the other, with the police behind. "Come down!" The mild reply, "I am about my Master's business." "Fetch him down!" One of the king's gallant men comes forward, and takes hold of the preacher's coat, but Bunyan fixed his eye on him, and holds out the open Bible in his hand; the eye and the Word are too much for the man, he lets go, and with a pale face retires. "See how this man trembles at the Word of God," shouts Bunyan after him. However, it would be madness to persist in opposition to the law, and Bunyan in due course is taken to jail. He is offered liberty if he will promise to hold no more meetings; no; accordingly he "went away to prison with God's comfort in his soul."

John Bunyan enters the prison, which is to be his home for twelve years. It is a most vile place, built

on one of the piers of Bedford Bridge, over the River Ouse. He is in the prime of life, and apparently just about to reach the height of his usefulness, when this occurs. How dark the dispensation ! And his poor wife and children, left to beggary, which it would be easy for him and them to bear if they were together. To separate from them is like pulling the flesh from his bones. Satan thrusts him into this "den." It proves God's hiding place. The jewel is safe, though the casket may not be very bright or clean. Had Bunyan been abroad, at large in those troublous times, his zeal so extraordinary and his ability even more than a match for it, would have certainly provoked Christ's enemies to put him to death. What would the world have been without the prison life of Bunyan ; and the fruit of it, his "Pilgrim's Progress ?" When God wished John Milton to do an immortal work, he shut him up in a dark prison ; in other words, made him blind. The same thing with John Bunyan, he needed quiet and retirement from the outer world of society's noisy and interminable strife. When he entered prison he felt, no doubt, that he was paying a great price for some greater good, which was yet hid from him. Would he call the price too much now, or would he not be ready to pay it many times over rather than leave undone the service it rendered to his Master ?

Attempts were made to get him to make a compromise between the claims of King Charles and King Jesus. "If I were out of prison to-day, I would preach the Gospel again to-morrow, by the help of God." It

was no use to try again. When brought to trial, his sentence was transportation and death, if he did not conform with the king's demands. Back to prison again, he began to make his mind up for the worst ; imagined himself approaching the gibbet, mounting the ladder, standing with the halter round his neck, had even his address to the spectators ready. In Bunyan's great imagination there was one who could not be a witness of his death, because her eyes were sightless, but who filled more of his anxiety than anything else or all else together : his poor blind Mary. " Poor child ! " thought I, " what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world ? Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow on thee."

However, the shadow of death passed by him. About the time when it should have been accomplished, the king's coronation took place, and his gracious majesty was pleased to extend favour to some of his prisoners. It was now that Bunyan's wife proved herself a brave and noble woman. Some offenders were to be released. She would make every effort to effect her husband's freedom ; and so she did. Travelled all the way to London, and petitioned the House of Lords. Sent back to the judges, she again and again appeared before them with the most tender and energetic appeals, though being a most delicate, modest, and retiring woman she would hardly have done this to save her own life. Everything she did that a courageous, high-

mind woman could do, but in vain. If the preaching tinker is not to die, or go into banishment, he must abide in prison. All the better for him, and for the world. He was not alone in prison,—about fifty or sixty other religious persons. And in the jailer he found a friend, who shewed him great favour, and allowed him liberty to receive visits from his friends, and even to make visits in the town, and attend religious meetings. This liberty was noticed by some of the higher officials and disapproved of, so that he was confined more closely to his “den” until near the end of his twelve long years of captivity. Worked with his hands in prison, writing books and making laces for sale, which his family sold for a subsistence to themselves and him. His food was brought in to him every day, and the jug is still preserved that was used in carrying his broth. The laces are all worn out; but the penwork of his fingers will last for ever, “Grace Abounding” and “Pilgrim’s Progress.”

December 21, 1671, aged 43, Bunyan still in prison, but often allowed out to attend and even to preach at religious meetings, is solemnly chosen as pastor of the congregation. Next year a band of prisoners of various creeds are set free, Bunyan among them. It was no favour shewn to him personally; but he happened to be one of many who were imprisoned, and it happened that the unprincipled king (Charles II.), wishing secretly to favour the Roman Catholics, thought the liberation of a number of Protestant sufferers would blind the eyes of the public to his hidden purpose. Bunyan lived

sixteen years after his liberation, and was a well known and very popular preacher. When he visited London crowds assembled to hear him. He was familiarly known as "Bishop Bunyan."

Most of his "Pilgrim's Progress" is supposed to have been written in prison, and for six years after his freedom it lay in concealment. When he began it, he had no intention of writing a book; but his mind was led on from one point to another, until the whole was complete, and even then he did not think it worth while publishing it; till, after some years, he was induced to lay it before the public to judge whether it was good or bad, for of his private friends some were of the one opinion and some of the other. The book stole quietly into the world, and gradually widened its circle of charmed readers, from the lower to the higher ranks in society, and from one age and country to another. It does not seem to have become very greatly famous till after Bunyan's death, which took place in London, August 31, 1688, the year of the Revolution. Bent on a mission of peacemaking between an angry father and disinherited son, he caught a severe cold by riding through heavy rain. The result was a violent fever, of which he died in a few days. He was buried in Bunhill Fields. A beautiful monument was erected to his memory in his native village.

There is only one imperishable monument which will make Bunyan a well known and cherished name to endless ages, and that is his "Pilgrim's Progress." That will endure when everything else commemorative,

wrought by human hands, has crumbled to dust. The wonderful thing concerning that book is, that it was produced in circumstances in which to all human appearance Bunyan's usefulness to his fellow-men was interrupted, and while writing it he had no idea of attempting or accomplishing more than to make the time of his imprisonment pass less drearily. This yields perhaps the richest of the many good lessons to be derived from Bunyan's life. God overrules the calamities of good men, not merely for their own welfare, but for the welfare of the world. Thus, under His all-wise superintendence, we get "*meat from the eater, and sweetness from the strong.*" "*There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will.*"

Perhaps since Apostle John, no human being has done so much as Bunyan has done to make the celestial world beautiful and attractive; and to guide pilgrim souls into it. By the bravery of his life, and the charm of his allegory, we feel that—like himself and his pilgrim—we could bear any hardship and brave any danger, rather than lose our place in the shining multitude on the other side of the dark and silent river. If they that turn many to righteousness shall shine with the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever, there will be few spirits around the Throne of the Eternal more brilliant than that of the poor tinker, whose name and memorial will continue to render the noblest service to Christ in this lower sphere, as long as the world lasts.

IN THE STEPS OF BUNYAN'S PILGRIM

I

THE BEGINNING OF THE PILGRIMAGE

We have first a glimpse of the dreamer. He is in a den, and that den is in a wilderness. He was walking through that wilderness, not expecting much, and not greatly surprised to find himself in a den. He who regards this world as a wilderness will not expect much in it ; and will not think it strange if hardships befall him. We have the Pilgrim in reality here, not in a dream. True, this world is full of loneliness ; God's handiwork is everywhere. " His paths drop fatness ; and the little hills rejoice on every side." But to a frail and sinful being such as man's soul is—the sweet sights and sounds, the beauty and the harmony that exist, the charms of sound and scenery, whilst they may interest in the fullest measure possible, and may even be brimful of enchantment, do not satisfy. Something is still wanting which the soul of man was made for.

"From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again."

By the witness of human nature in its deepest needs, Bunyan was right.

To Bunyan, life was a pilgrimage, a weary pilgrimage; and this world a wilderness; a place where one cannot settle down and rest in for long: a place that has not the means of supplying us with what we deeply need. A man cold, weary, hungry, takes refuge in his house; there is a table there, but no food on it: there is a fireplace, and no fire in it: a bed to lie on, with nothing to soften the hard board and still harder stone pillow. The cold daylight struggles through the dust-covered window, and if a ray of sunlight does enter, it is only to reveal discomforts that were hid before. This house is a wilderness to the poor man, who finds it so ill able to meet his wants. Likewise, this world, from Bunyan's point of view, is an ill-furnished house for man: therefore the house of his pilgrimage, not his rest: for rest he must move on somewhere else. To the young and unthinking, to inexperienced and thoughtless souls, it seems no wilderness. Give them what pleases them in personal gratification, the world is a charming place; they are delighted with it, and all that it contains—could wish no better, and would be sorry indeed to leave it. But to one old enough, or wise enough, to look wider than his finger ends, and beyond the present moment's pleasure, the world seems no better than it really is: a sinful place, and a barren wilderness, where you hunger for bread it cannot give you, and thirst for living water, where no water is.

This was Bunyan's view of the world. He speaks of entering the den therefore as a matter of course. He expected the wilderness to abound in such places. His only surprise, perhaps, that he had not lighted on his den much sooner. Expect trials in life, and you will not be surprised ; and better able to endure them when they come. How did Bunyan fare in his den ? He took it very composedly ; he laid him down to sleep ; he would rest himself in the den from the weariness. So God often brings a great trouble on us, and lo ! it becomes a bed of rest to us, from a thousand lesser troubles. We get sleep in the den : sleep, which no other part of the wilderness could give. God brings His servant into great distress, and His own hands make the bed as comfortable as it can be. Bunyan really felt Bedford jail, the den to which he refers, the house of God and the gate of heaven. He had more peace and quietness, more unbroken fellowship with God, in high heavenly places, then, than ever before in his life. He got meat out of the eater, and sweetness from the strong. Of his meditations in his den's quiet retirement, one of the fruits was the " Pilgrim's Progress." " As I slept I dreamed a dream."

Let us turn now from the dreamer to his dream, from the living epistle to the written page, from the person to the picture. See how Bunyan represents the awakened sinner : a man clothed with rags : the sinner feels himself to be unrighteous ; this is the first symptom of awakening. Yesterday he felt himself to be as good as his neighbours ; could find no flaw in his moral

clothing. To-day he can scarce put his finger on a whole place : clothed with rags. Has he changed his clothing? No, but his eyes. God has lent him new eyes, and he finds himself in a woeful state of beggary. Rags—rags—rags. His good actions—rags ; good words—rags ; good intentions—rags ; good feelings—rags ; good-heartedness—rags ! You have felt—I hope you have—that an action for which you praised yourself has sometimes had a new light thrown on it, and lo ! it was turned to rags. You did a good act, and did it very meekly and quietly, as if you were ashamed to let your left hand know what your right hand was doing, and yet when you considered it afterwards, you saw that pure selfishness was at the bottom of it. Now, when a person comes to see this self-seeking all through his heart, mind, word, conduct, he is in an awakened state ; feels himself in every respect unrighteous : clothed with rags. He has discovered himself : and what a sad discovery it is !

Notice the man's attitude : " standing in a certain place." The rags indicate unrighteousness : this standing indicates uncertainty. He has come to a halt, not knowing where next to move ; and stands ready to move wherever he may be directed. Moreover, he is standing with his face from his own house. He has turned his back, and fled from the company of those who see his rags to be ornaments, and call them so. A truly awakened sinner feels it intolerable when friends tell him how good he is. Ah ! you like flattery—like to be called good, and kind, and gentle : like to have

sweet epithets applied to yourself and your words and deeds ; not readily will you turn your back on a house where your vanity is regaled with these—unless God gives you a pair of angel's eyes, and then you will wheel round, and flee from their fine phrases, with as little of God's truth in them as there is comeliness or pleasure in vile rags.

“ A book in his hand.” He feels he has been misled by his own understanding : has turned like a silly sheep into his own way : has found he is more of a fool than he thought himself to be : he must apply for counsel somewhere. There was an old book lying amidst the dust and rubbish of a by-corner in the house, cast away, neglected, almost forgotten : he had searched it out, and has brought it with him : the law of the Lord is in his hand. But see, there is “ a great burden upon his back.” He feels enormously guilty. It is one thing for a person to see himself altogether unrighteous, and another thing to be deeply distressed about it. The sinner is here represented as weighed down by a sense of his guiltiness. Conscience has brought freshly to remembrance many forgotten sins ; unfelt yesterday, they are a burden to-day, a great burden : the small sin has grown to a fearful size : the little one has become a thousand.

Let us watch the awakened sinner as he stands out in the fields, heavy-laden, seeking rest ; but where to find it he cannot tell. He opens the book. Perhaps he did not like to open it in his own house. Perhaps he did not like to be seen handling it there, or by any of

his friends and acquaintances. Slipped it out of its dusty corner into his pocket, and now alone out in the fields takes it out and reads. And as he reads, the tears drip from his eyes, and his hands begin to tremble. There is penitence there, and fear. He has been a great sinner, and he mourns with godly sorrow over the fact ; but he reads, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die : " and as yet he sees no way of escape. He sees himself in the Bible as in a glass, in all his vileness ; and he sees there also a vision of the wrath to come on every unforgiven sinner. His agitation increases ; and he can no more restrain himself from crying out than he can restrain his tears or his trembling. "What shall I do ? " None but the crows hear his lamentable cry ; and none but the echoes of the lonely place answer it. Yes, it is heard in heaven, and the angels of God respond to it with the joy they feel over every sinner that repenteth.

Relieved somewhat by his cry, and his tears, he returns home, with more heart and courage. He will hide his distress from his wife and children ; but his distress increases the more he tries to hide it ; and at length he breaks his mind to them : tells them of his awakening to a sense of sin, and the fearful consequences about to follow : the danger impending over him and others. The appeal he makes to his loved ones is very touching ; but they are not at all affected by it. They are rather inclined to smile when he weeps. They feel no sin, and fear no danger. He is like one speaking to them in a foreign tongue. If they are concerned at

all, it is for his reason, which they think has got unhinged. His family, uncles, brothers, cousins, think him crazy ; or his brain is in a fever ; they think sleep will do him good. Ah ! they would like him to doze off again into their own sleep of indifference : with all haste they put him to bed : next morning, worse and worse. He preaches to them more and more ; they hate to hear him reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come : try all means to bring him to his senses, and drive his notions from his head ; laugh at him, mock him, scold him, and then finally, thinking he is not so much of a madman as a fool, they resolve to let him have his own way, and avoid him. He will not be advised : they have done their best for him, poor man, and if he *will* be stupid, and mope his life away in silly sanctimoniousness, let him do so, he has himself to blame ! Poor man, he has disturbed their peace without apparently doing anything to mend his own. For some days he spends his time alone, either in the fields or in his chamber ; sometimes reading, sometimes praying : sorrowing not less over the condition of his dear friends, than over his own, so different from theirs.

The awakened and unawakened are in feeling wide as the poles asunder ; the difference between them is that between the living and the dead. In all other things, except spiritual, they may be at one ; but in regard to spiritual things, which are the only real and eternal things, they are at variance. And it is curious to notice that the blind, and deaf, and dead are those who persistently and strenuously maintain that the

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others have lost their senses. It has ever been, since the first family existed on earth, that if one in the household be awakened, the peace of the house is gone, until all the others are awakened too. Often the only peacemaker in a family is the one who gets the blame of disturbing it. When one gets God's eyes to see with, the world in him and around him is greatly changed in his view, and he can no more speak and act as he did formerly than water can act alike at the freezing and at the boiling point. But those who have not His anointed eyes, who have none but their natural eyes to look with, see no other change in him than a change from health to sickness, from sense to nonsense, from sanity to madness.

In our first view of the Pilgrim he was in an awakened state ; but not yet begun in his pilgrim or Christian course. He was out in the fields : not sure where to turn his face and his footsteps. Of this he was sure enough, that he could not stay in safety in his own house, and among his own kindred. He loved his home and friends as much as any one could, but the doom of the city was hanging over them ; he could not rest there. Neither could he persuade them of their danger. There was peace when all were asleep. But a strange scene happened when awakening came to him. He tried to rouse them ; and they tried to soothe him to sleep again. Both sides failed. He could not awaken them ; they could not get him to sleep, although they got him sure enough to bed. They wanted to drive his fancies concerning sin, death, and judgment from his

brain. It added greatly to his grief that he could not persuade them to be as anxious as himself. He was mad, they thought ; and he, truly, could not help thinking the same of them. Light had come ; but the darkness comprehended it not. Thus is the man sorely oppressed by sin both from within and from without ; for the most painful effect of sin, next to that felt in one's own awakened conscience, is that produced by the foolish words and conduct of unawakened but loving and beloved friends.

Now we see the man becoming a pilgrim : the sinner is set in the way of seeking the Saviour. We read how he began his pilgrimage, and what befel him at the start.

II

MEETING WITH EVANGELIST

The Book was the occasion of the pilgrim's distress. Yet he read and read on. Some would have thrown it away, and taken up another more pleasing. He felt it was a book of truth, and he was brave enough to face the truth, however much it had to say against him. The Book was not the cause (only occasion) of his distress, no more than the physician who tells you your trouble is to blame for originating it. The Book shewed him his need for salvation, hence his cry: "What must I do?" Then we are told he wanted to run, and yet stood still: both showing his sincerity. He was ready to go, and to go with all alacrity in any direction where the truth might point him. But not one step would he move till light came.

This is the attitude in which every sincere soul is found—ready to go—nay, to run in the way of salvation, as soon as it is clearly and convincingly pointed out. More light soon comes to the anxious soul, and brings Evangelist, a bearer of good news: an expositor of the Word of God: an ambassador for Christ, speaking the truth of God. Evangelist does at first very much as the Book has been doing. What else could you

expect of a true expositor of the Word ? He does not relieve the man's anxiety, but rather increases it. God does not take us at our word merely. He probes to the heart. Wherefore dost thou cry ?—Answer—The fear of death. Why fear death, if this life has so many evils in it ?—Answer—I am afraid the life to come has more evils in it for me than this. Why stand still ?—Answer—I know not whither to go.

The physician is probing the wound, not to make it sorer, but to cure it. God asks of every penitent an explanation of his anxiety and tears. He searches and tries us ; but we are expected to search and try ourselves. The last probe Evangelist gives is the sorest. He gives him a parchment roll ; it means a text of Scripture ; and on it is "Flee from the wrath to come!" No place in the whole Bible, doubtless, was so much fitted as this to rouse the poor man's anxiety to the very highest pitch. But God is a very tender physician. His best and our worst meet. God's Evangelist comes to the sinner when the sinner is at his wit's end, knowing not what to do or where to go. And when God's finger points the way, and he begins to run, it shows how thoroughly sincere he is.

He is not yet in the way, but his pilgrimage may be said to be begun. He is in the great wide field of uncertainty and error, and getting out of it with all speed. He does not see the strait gate, Christ, but he can see a light, and all he has to do at present is to be true to that light, keep it in his eye, follow it, and he will not miss the gate. What is wanted is thorough sincerity

of heart. "If any man will (is willing to) do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The awakened sinner is now a man of faith; and not merely a man of feeling. Now he believes in a hope set before him; and he runs that he may obtain. Scarcely has he begun his course, when he is brought under severe trial, and tempted to return. First, his wife and children. They are not disposed to go along with him as he desires: they do what they can to stay him in his mad career. If his leaving was painful to them, their stay in the city was to him more painful still. They don't see and feel as he does. It is a separation between them in sympathy. This often happens in a household. The unawakened wife and children see nothing but folly in the anxiety of the husband and father. God's light is before his eyes. He simply follows it. Forsakes many pleasures which they think quite innocent; finds pleasure in things which are miserable to them. They entreat him to be what he was before. Blame him for breaking the family peace. What is he to do? If they clamour for him to become worldly again, is he to do so? If he should do so, would it be good for them; or would it not be the worst thing for them, as well as for himself? It is very unpleasant indeed to the rest when only one in a family is piously inclined. What is that one to do if they clamour against him? Note what this pilgrim does. He puts his fingers in his ears, and runs on crying, "Life, life, eternal life!" This is the only way of peace and salvation for all parties.

If anything can sweeten the world to a man, it is beloved wife and children : so the temptation is very strong ; but to one awakened to the reality of things as they are in earth and heaven, wife and children, if they will not flee with him from destruction, must be left to wait on till a better thought possesses them. He must go alone. Break the nearest and dearest of earthly ties, rather than be unfaithful to the truth. Turn your face to God, though it should be necessary to turn your back on weeping relatives and friends ; stop your ears to their entreaties if they are opposite to God's. Run to Him, whatever else you leave behind. " If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." Endure any sacrifice rather than lose your quick and tender impressions of Divine things. Forsake any company or place or occupation where these impressions are not refreshed and deepened.

The temptation comes also from the wider circle of his neighbours, friends, acquaintances. Two of the best of these, according to the world's judgment, make a desperate effort to save our pilgrim—Obstinate and Pliable, who run in the way of salvation only to arrest a poor sinner in it, and bring him back to Destruction. It is likely our pilgrim will try to take them on with him ; it is hardly to be expected that Obstinate will go one foot ; but Pliable may. These two resolved, we are told, to bring the pilgrim back by force : which means against his own inclination. A man like Pliable could not use force of any kind, except that mild quality called coaxing. Obstinate's method of salvation will be more

like compulsion. When one comes under religious impressions, and becomes therefore disagreeable to carnal friends, some of them will try tears and entreaties to bring back the world's lost worshipper, and some will try threats and reproaches. Obstinate laughs at his daughter's penitential tears ; commands her to dry them up instantly ; and threatens to turn her out of doors if she will not be sociable, and enjoy herself like other people. Pliable is not made of such stern stuff. He beseeches his pious wife, for the sake of peace, not to read her Bible so incessantly, and hold so scrupulously to its precepts. Her strange new-fangled ways make his heart sick of her ; and he reminds her how pleasant it was when they were both of one mind, and went hand in hand into all the innocent amusements of the world. She says that these amusements can no more please her now than the rattle of her babyhood can. Pliable cannot understand her tastes, is too feeble a man to grow angry with her, and can only use tears and entreaties, or stand sore amazed.

These two of the world's delegates soon make up to the pilgrim. They use energy and expedition worthy of a better cause. Their object is to save the pilgrim by bringing him back to the doomed city. This is the world's way of salvation : like its way of giving pleasure by feeding the conscience with fire, or at any rate meantime with fuel, for the fire is sure to come by and by. The pilgrim runs for life ; but not so fast as Obstinate and Pliable run for death : his destruction and their own. When Satan puts a man in the way of a

bad business, he hurries him on therein with all speed ; and the poor sinner is made to run, with more energy and eagerness than the best men will run on the best of errands. He hasteth to do evil. The pilgrim has the first word with his pursuers. Is it possible they have come to join him ? No ; to persuade him to return. On hearing this he guards himself well by becoming a pleader himself with them, to follow the opposite course. If you wish to stand firm against the temptations of evil acquaintances, you must not stand merely on the defensive, but exert yourself positively on their behalf,—return good for evil, overcome evil with good,—you cannot preserve yourself by mere passive resistance. By no means the pilgrim will turn back ; by all means he will try to hinder his neighbours from doing so. He has no affection for the City of Destruction, though it is his native place. Why so called ? Because of sin. Where is that city ? No farther off than every unbeliever's own heart. Sin must be Destruction, if the holy God is worthy of being called the living God. The pilgrim warns his neighbours that if they go back, they will sink “ lower than the grave,” and surely he was not far wrong : the grave holds only a lost body,—a worse place it is that holds a ruined soul.

Obstinate is not likely to be moved by reasonable arguments ; and he speaks as though all truth and reasonableness belonged to him. “ What ! leave our friends and comforts behind us ! ” He has convinced himself that sin is not sin as long as it has any pleasure to yield. The pilgrim is called “ Christian ” here for the

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first time. He has not yet found Christ, but he has found faith in Him, and is on the way to a realisation of what his faith yet only hopes for. He knows Christ by faith; not yet by experience. Bunyan evidently regards his pilgrim as a Christian from the time that he begins his pilgrimage. When he feels need for a Saviour, and believes in Christ as the Saviour he needs, then is he a Christian, or a Christ's man. He has no doubt whatever that there is salvation for him, and for his neighbours, if only they will go forward and seek it. His faith is great, for he urges his two neighbours to come and prove his words, before he has proved them himself. There is something in the Biblical Gospel which commands reverence and trust; and by its own sincerity it yields assurance to every honest soul that it will not fail when put to the test: this test the first thing Christian, the last thing Obstinate, seeks to apply. No stubborn man will ever give a fair hearing. Faith cometh by hearing; and there seems to be a suspicion in many an unbeliever's heart that a fair hearing of the Word of God would be fatal to his cherished unbelief,—“Away with your book!” Obstinate cries.

It did not take much to get Pliable to run with Obstinate. It does not take much to get him to run with Christian. The weathercock has turned; well oiled, a puff of wind moves it one way or the other. When Obstinate in his anger begins to call Christian bad names, Pliable, good, easy man, is somewhat offended, and his sympathies rather incline to Christian, especially when he hears that there are better things to

be got in Christian's path than he can hope for at home. He is not at all discontented with the City of Destruction, but he has no objections to prefer the Celestial City, if he can get his good things exchanged for better there. He has no conviction of sin ; but a half-hearted desire for some pleasures connected with holiness. No penitence ; but he would like well enough to be saved too, if that means more enjoyment than he has at present. No faith ; but simply greed for somewhat which he thinks would gratify his selfishness. He yields to Christian rather than Obstinate ; and shews more zeal than even Christian to be on the way. Come then, he says, let us be going. The seed sown in thin soil makes appearance first, and promises a great deal. Pliable's lust for pleasure seems in greater ardour for heaven than Christian's principle.

Obstinate turns back ; and notice that Pliable, his friend, unlike a Christian, makes no effort to get him on the Christian course too. Why should he indeed ? If Obstinate goes back to Destruction, Pliable does not pity him, for he thinks it is not a bad place to live in, only there is more enjoyment to be expected in the Celestial City ; and if his friend Obstinate won't come, he will have all the more of the pleasure for himself. They could see the towers and palaces of Destruction from where they stood, perhaps hear the music of its concerts, and the applause rising from its lecture rooms and theatres. Christian's good things were as yet unseen. Obstinate had no belief in them because he could not see them. Christian apprehended them by faith. Pliable

receives them by hearsay ; and thinks if they turn out true he will have the more ; if false, he will have no less than he has already in his native place, and he can quite easily content himself with that. One may well be inclined to have more hope of Obstinate than of him, and need not be surprised if Obstinate should turn up by and by as Christian's companion Faithful.

III

THE SLOUGH OF DESPOND

Christian is constantly referring to his Book ; Pliable does not ask what is written ; but what is to be enjoyed. Not what does God say ; but what does He offer. Better to have our enjoyment in God's Word than in His gifts. " Let us mend our pace " says Pliable. Christian was too slow for him. The answer of Christian is very significant—" My burden !" Pliable felt none : he seemed the better Christian of the two ; full of hunger for the promises ; and hurrying on to the enjoyment of them. Seemingly, this was just what should be ; but in truth it was pure selfishness. " Tell me what the things are, and how to be enjoyed ? What else ? What company ? Shall we be sharers ? " These are the questions he asks ; and they are just such as he had been used to ask at home when a grand concert was about to be given, when a great ball was in prospect, or a great public dinner. " Awake to righteousness, and sin not," says God's Word. Pliable was perfectly asleep, or indifferent to righteousness. If anything pleased him, it was quite right in his opinion. If anybody flattered him he was a good man. It is quite certain that if Obstinate had had a play bill with him of

unusual attractiveness, or a ticket to offer for some forthcoming grand levée or assembly in the doomed city, he would not have returned thither alone. Pliable would have been most happy to return with him. But it so happened that Obstinate had nothing of the kind to offer as an inducement : Christian, on the other hand, had something that took Pliable's fancy : golden crowns, golden harps, thrones, kingdoms, sceptres, white robes, and other glorious things. The poor man's heart was captivated, and he went on his way rejoicing ; the only thing he had to complain of being the slow pace of his companion. " Come on, let us mend our pace."

Pliable is no uncommon character. It took little persuasion to make him go with Christian. It took his fancy to be a pilgrim too. Standing between the joys of earth and the joys of heaven, he was like a child with two kinds of sweetmeats offered to it. He chose that which at the moment seemed to him to have the greater glitter on it. Now there are many people who seem to be at heart neither one thing nor another : pleased with religious things : no less pleased with worldly things. They hold to the one or the other just as the fancy takes them ; just as their convenience or sense of comfort may dictate. Speak of the glories of religion, its joys on earth and its rewards in heaven, and they exclaim with Pliable—" This is very pleasant ; and what else ?" The same words they use when the world displays its vanities before their eyes, and puts to their lips the intoxicating wine of its amusements. " This is very pleasant !" These people do not read the Bible ;

or they read it only as a task. If you quote a rich passage, they say it is very pleasant, and let it pass with more ease than they would let pass a picture in the book of fashion, which they say is very pleasant too. They seem to have no idea that there is such a thing as a Rock of Truth and Righteousness in the Universe, on which they must either build their hopes or dash them to pieces. They will teach a class in the Sunday School readily ; or join the church readily ; if they think it will please you, and bring no discomfort to themselves. But they would have done the opposite quite as readily, if you could have shewn them a prospect of as much personal ease, and as much advancement in the good graces of their neighbours. They seem such stuff as neither God nor devil can make anything of. You can no more think of Pliable being a martyr, or making a sacrifice for anything or anybody, than you can imagine a vessel made of viewless air or of unstable water.

Young persons especially are fond of pleasing themselves, and prone to think that what is pleasing is sufficient reason for it being allowable. "Why should I not do this, or not go there, if it makes me happy ?" This is the foolish cry of pliable inexperience in the way of error. But it is just as foolish when made in the way of truth, for if one have no reason for walking in that way but that it is pleasant, the way of truth will soon be forsaken, being, as it is, full of unpleasant trials and difficulties. Let your question be, "Is it right ?" not, is it agreeable ? And if right, stick to it through thick and through thin. This is what Pliable, as we should

have expected, does not do when he falls into his first trial, in the shape of a miry slough called Despond. This fall of his into Despond means awakening to a sense of sin. He has not had this before. It makes him feel unclean and wretched : he sees himself lying in sin, as in a miry slough. But still he does not feel penitent as Christian does : he grows angry—not with himself, but with his neighbour for bringing him into that state. Don't blame, but rather bless one whose society makes you feel your sins and shortcomings. Keep in that company, though at first it may wound your pride and cast shame upon your vanity. Christian sinks deep in the mire because more penitent than the other, whose vanity like a bag of wind keeps him up.

Some when convicted of sin one day, are found seeking relief the next in books of amusement, or in gay society, or some other such worldly remedies for an unquiet conscience. Pliable makes a desperate effort as if for dear life to get back into his old way : and succeeds in his purpose. He gets out of the Slough on the wrong side, that next his own house ; and hastens back without looking to see what has become of his neighbour : leaves Christian as readily as he left Obstinate a little while ago. Oh that one could be Obstinate on the side of Truth ; and Pliable in the hands of Christ ! Besides that one which you meet on the way to heaven, there are other Sloughs of Despond. Many of them in the streets of Destruction, in the lanes of Legality, and other Christian towns. Do not think that every man who gets into low spirits is in the place where we now find

Christian. The greater number are not. It is not a sense of personal demerit, shortcoming, sinfulness, that afflicts them ; but a sense of some personal loss for which they blame not themselves but others. Or if it be a sense of personal sin the despondency, or the greater part of it, arises from experience of the bitter fruits of sin, rather than from a sense of the nature of sin itself as an offence against a good and merciful God.

Here is a paragraph from one of the old newspapers published in the City of Destruction :—

“ ACCIDENT.—Yesterday our respected citizen, Mr. Hold-the-World, met with a serious fall on leaving his banking premises in Crooked Lane. It appears that a few days ago he had, with his usual unselfish and public spirit, caused a broken part of the pavement near his own door to be mended with a composition of carnal policy, for which service the thanks of the community are due to him. But inadvertently putting his foot on it yesterday before it was quite dry, he fell, and rolled into the wide gutter which happened to be in high flood at the time. With difficulty he was extracted from the muddy torrent, and carried to Carnal Cure Hospital in a most miserable plight, where he still lies in a low condition. His injuries are mostly about the head. When he fell, a small bag with sums in it to a large amount slipped from his hand, and has not been seen or heard of since.”

Many a one falls into Despondency when his well-laid schemes of selfishness turn out badly : as Mr. Hold-the-World does when he loses his credit, or his money ;

as my lord Hate-Good does after the failure of his patriotic efforts to level the Delectable Mountains, and turn the Palace Beautiful into a place of musical and theatrical entertainment, with other suitable refreshments of rational and humanising kind. Christian's sadness rises from a sense of his own personal guiltiness in the sight of God. He blames nobody but himself. The Slough is of his own making. "Behold, I am vile!" "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned!" Suddenly and unexpectedly he has come to this. The experience is horrible. He is overwhelmed in it. This is *his* Slough of Despond. Not loss of anything but his purity in the sight of the Holiest. Not sin's consequences, but sin itself. It was the wrath to come, the danger of sin, that made him flee from the City of Destruction. He has advanced some way since then into the light of saving truth; and now it is not sin's danger but sin's defilement that distresses him. Christian is left to tumble in the Slough alone. Some souls do not seem to have capacity enough to feel the loneliness of sin. Paul at the moment when he felt himself the chief of sinners must have felt this loneliness. Far from God and far from man also. The natural tendency of sin is to isolate the sinner. A society or union of sinners is an absurdity, a contradiction. Oneness or community of feeling is impossible, except in oneness with God.

Below the surface there can be as little fellowship between sinners as between light and darkness. And when, as in Christian's case here, the sinner is fully awakened to see what his sin is, and bound of course to

see it worse in himself because more nearly than anywhere else,—bound to feel himself *chief* of sinners, he is thrown into a depth of feeling separating him as far apart from his fellow-men as from his God. This loneliness is fearful. It is the Christian's Slough of Despond. What is he to do? To whom will he flee for relief? Pliable betakes himself to man; Christian to God. The one struggles to get out of his loneliness by destroying the *sense* of sin; the other by destroying the sin itself. No doubt Christian felt it to be a serious loss when his companion Pliable left him, and went back at the very time when he particularly needed the sympathy and help of a friend. Christian stood sinking under his heavy burden, yet stedfastly keeping his face in the right direction. If he died here he would die (such his resolve) with the wicket gate in view. So has many an anxious sinner, in his utter loneliness, helpless and almost hopeless, under the mighty burden of his sins, resolved that, if he must go, he would go down to perdition looking fixedly on Christ. This is the faith that never fails to be victorious.

Help came to Christian on the Godward side of his despondency. The world had robbed him of his Pliable. Just then God gifted him with Help. It was a good exchange. "A man came to him." How often does God send help at unexpected times, and in unexpected ways? You may be in deep despondency, and have failed to get relief from any of the common sources whence it might be expected. But in a railway carriage, or in passing some person on the street, or looking in at

a shop window, or entering some church by accident, you hear a word spoken, it takes you by the hand like the man named Help, and in a moment you are out of the slough, and have your feet on the Rock, and the new song in your mouth. In answer to the man's questions, Christian declares it was the danger of sin that first made him run, fear followed him hard, and in consequence he fell in; but he must needs learn something beyond that; and in the Slough he learned it. Henceforth he has a new motive to urge him on; not merely the danger attending sin, but the vileness of the thing itself. Christian with a little more intelligence in his faith would have got over the Slough more easily. There were steps over it. One of these was, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though red like crimson, they shall be as the wool;" the rest were of similar kind: but so intense was his fear and his eagerness in the race to which it urged him, that he saw not the steps. Like a hare pursued by hounds, it will rush up to your feet, if you be in its way, without seeing you, so intent is its eye kept on the pursuing enemy.

IV

MR. WORLDLY WISEMAN

The dreamer makes enquiry of the man named Help regarding the Slough, and is told it cannot be mended. As long as sin is sin there must be such state of mind as is represented by the place. You cannot imagine the Prodigal Son coming back to his father without some degree of self-loathing. No true penitent returning to God can avoid being depressed more or less by the unforgiven sin which he carries with him. There are steps across the Slough, and he may see them : may find comfort from the promises. But generally the weather is bad, and the steps hidden. Or if circumstances are favourable to the anxious soul, he may view them through a fog of mistaken feelings ; may be attracted by other promises than God's ; and so, with a dizziness of the head, may lose foothold on the steps. These two things, change of weather and dizziness of the head, make more difficult to passengers the Slough, which all must cross on the way to Christ. It is, so to speak, unfavourable change of weather when God's dealings in Providence become severely afflictive : it is dizziness of the head when there is an unsettling, not of outward

circumstances, but of our sentiments and desires respecting them.

A kind friend becomes unkind : you trusted him ; and he has proved false : he has not kept his promises ; and in consequence you find it more difficult to believe that God will keep His. Your friend's unfaithfulness is to your own faith like a change of weather from bright Summer to bleak Winter. You were pushing eagerly forward when this happened, this change of weather, and then, without being relieved of your own sin one whit, you were thrown into hideous doubt whether anything in the universe were free from it, not excepting God Himself. Your ground of hope in His promises became soft and slippery : began to yield under you : you sank in the Slough of Despond. Prove untrue in any way, practise deceit in heart or conduct, the issues go forth to the end of the universe, and to all eternity. The sin affects God ; He feels it ; and who else not, through Him ? You cannot damage your own character without casting a slur on God's name. If you be unkind or untrue, some poor pilgrim-soul on the way back to God will be led thereby to think Him unkind and false. If you tell a lie, you make God a liar.

Sometimes a change of weather happens apparently beyond the control of any but the Highest. A mother is anxious about her soul, seeking peace and nearly finding it, when her child dies : the weather has changed, and her hope fades in despondency. She is tempted not to trust *any* of God's promises, because *one* seems to have failed. A man is in business. Suddenly at noon-

tide the sun of his prosperity goes down : this happens while he is on his way to the wicket gate ; he falls into deep despondency, thinking that what has happened to his temporal affairs is a sure sign of what is coming upon his soul. Though no change outwardly occur, the pilgrim's head may swim a little. Standing on the steps, leaning on the promises of God, a drop or two of the wine of worldliness will make the eye unsteady and the feet slide. Indolence sometimes does it. A good woman may be deep in the Slough simply because she does not keep her house tidy and her children's faces clean. She must not expect comfort from God's promises while God's angels of fresh air and sweet sunshine are fluttering about her doors and windows, most anxious to enter her home with blessings manifold, and are not permitted.

Young people are generally affected with the giddiness without the despondency. If they are in good health you do not find them near the Christian's Slough of Despond. They are not dissatisfied with the world as it is : they are usually well pleased with themselves. It is not their fault if they have little experience of life ; if they have little thought about the past, present, or future. A strong appetite for pleasure ; a capacity for being pleased with toys ; a facility for finding new ones when the old are laid aside. All this is unavoidable, and perhaps not altogether to be regretted, unless when the giddy stage lasts beyond the period which Nature has assigned to it. We may be sure that if Christians were as happy as their religion seeks to make them

there would be more instances of early piety. Some young persons are without giddiness and yet not without the joy that seems to accompany it. They begin early to hate sin, and love righteousness ; begin early to drink happiness from God's communion cup. They get easily over the Slough of Despond when it comes in their way. If all the redeemed have experienced it more or less, let every anxious soul be gladdened to know that they have all surpassed it in due time, and gone on their way compassed about with songs of deliverance.

Christian gets safely on to solid ground ; Pliable gets home by the backdoor of repentance, and finds his home almost as comfortless as the Slough was. His neighbours visit him. Most of them treat him as a mother will sometimes treat her child, when rescued from drowning in a well,—she gives it a good beating. Pliable, now safely restored to his friends, now rescued from the dangers of salvation, meets with more rebuffs than congratulations. Perhaps they kindly mean it for his good, to prevent him from doing the like again, which, with one of his soft temperament, is not improbable. Some call him wise man ; some fool ; some coward. Wise for coming back ; fool for going away ; coward for not staying away. Pliable is one who pleases everybody ; and pleases nobody : two phases of the same thing. He serves everybody and nobody—neither God, nor Mammon, and yet both, according as you look at it. He is all things to all men ; and nothing to any of them. He is in short Pliable in everyone's

hands, excepting the angel of truth. He is neither man, deity, nor devil. Yes, he is man; and a very common man too: to be seen any day standing with one foot in the church, and the other in the world; bearing the Christian name, and yet in no respect different from worldly time-serving people.

It is the spirit of Pliable that produces so much conformity with the world on the part of Christians. They imagine they are gaining the world over to their side when in truth they are gaining nothing but secret contempt and ridicule. The world knows the truth, and can admire it: judges the church by the true standard, and is able often and justly to reproach a Christian church for having too much of Pliable in its practice, and too much of comrade Obstinate in its doctrines. Be Pliable in the hands of Jesus; Obstinate on the side of truth.

Christian meets with new company. A man named Help found him in the Slough of Despond, and rescued him. God's help has come; now the world comes and offers wisdom. The poor man is sorely burdened; more anxious for deliverance than ever. Like a man under a terrible disease, ready to listen to any advice, and try all means. What will Christian do, between God's help and man's, both urging him to seek peace, but in diverse ways? Here will be the trial of his faith. God's help is unseen, it is merely a word to be trusted. The world's help comes into view prominently, takes Christian's eye, comes in the shape of a man of genteel appearance and good address: his name, Mr.

Worldly Wiseman. He is really a wise man, or he would not be named so ; but then his wisdom is circumscribed by time and sense. If there were nothing beyond this world, he would be wise man indeed, and solely, without the unchristian epithet that precedes that name ; but since there is, beyond this world, something of which he takes no account, he is worldly wiseman, which in God's vocabulary is another name for foolishness.

Carnal Policy is the name of the town he belongs to, and is the same thing as the name of the man himself, in other words. It is a great town indeed ; for how few, may we suppose, in regulating their lives, and forming their plans, for to-day, and to-morrow, take into account the soul's wellbeing, the will of God, the issues of eternity ! Carnal Policy is near Destruction. Christian and this new friend met as they were crossing the way of each other. They were not going in the same direction ; nor were they going in opposite directions. Mr. Wiseman of the World comes aslant Christian's way ; unlike Obstinate and Pliable, whose way was the reverse of Christian's. Had he been simply worldly, as these two were, he would have met Christian in the teeth. But being worldly wise, he met him sideways. Had he happened to meet Obstinate and Pliable going back to Destruction, it would have been sideways too. He was neither for heaven, nor for hell. He was for the world, taking, as he thought, a prudent mean between the course of the righteous overmuch, and the deplorably unrighteous ; the visionaries who looked to

the unseen and eternal state for happiness, and the immoral sensualists who sought happiness by lawless use of things seen and temporal. It is important to notice this feature in his character; it is his main feature, and if we keep it in view, all else pertaining to him will be more easily understood. He represents the large class in society, who condemn and keep apart from the irreligious and profligate; and yet have no liking for God's holiness, or the ways of those who strive wearily to make advances towards it. Blind to the true nature of sin, as ungodliness; seeing it only as an offence against decency, one's good health, comfort, and prospects of worldly prosperity.

He is, in appearance, a man of high respectability, well dressed, happy looking, intelligent, polite, affable. He has also a kind of charity in his disposition, for which he has a great name in his native town; he is proverbial for lending assistance to the poor and needy; and especially those needy persons who get insanely anxious about their sins. It is not strange, therefore, that he should stop, and speak a kind word to this poor beggar, limping on so laboriously, and uttering so many sighs and groans. "How now, good fellow," he says with a patronising air, "whither away after this burdened manner?"

RESULT OF FOLLOWING BAD ADVICE

Some years ago, Sir Oliver Lodge declared that the sense of sin had dropped out of modern life. Perhaps it was superficially and lightly spoken ; and without reflection on the tremendous consequences which that fact—if fact it was—involved. He said the man in the street did not bother about his sins, as though that man were a true index of what man is intrinsically and essentially ! But surely, since the creation, the man in the street never did bother about his sins. The fewest folk have ever been the religious and spiritual. It was the general need for spiritual awakening that brought Hebrew sects and psalmists into existence ; brought the Man of men into the world, convincing it of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. The man in the street is no prophet. Nor is the man of business, or of science. Human nature changes not, and never will. Until the twenty-third Psalm, and the Lord's Prayer, cease to be interesting, and are no more remembered amongst men, it is likely that the portion of the human race most competent to judge, will decide that Bunyan was not wrong when he dealt with sin as though

it were the only thing men had reason to be concerned about,—the vile and deadly violation not only of peaceful relations with their Maker and Friend, but of every hope of unity and peace within themselves as well.

In personal witness, I feel more a sinner as my years increase ; and no greater sinner is known to me. I shudder as I look back on almost every phase and spot of life, to find hosts of appalling things rise up which were there before, but I did not know them to be there. Thoughts, words, deeds, before God, which cause me now the deepest horror and distress ; and yet, they were in a life all through, and up till now, marked by no viciousness, and deemed highly virtuous. Millions more bear this witness than are supposed to do. “ Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ? ” “ Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich ; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear ; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.”

Mr. Worldly Wiseman is sometimes referred to as a wily deceiver. But he is no such thing. He is quite sincere in his kind enquiries regarding Christian's troubles and intentions ; and in the advices he gives. He does not mean to deceive the pilgrim. He means to do him good by putting him, as he thinks, in the right way of finding peace. He does not say one thing and

mean another. He is truly and honestly—as far as his light goes—placing his wisdom at the disposal of one who certainly needs sympathy and help of some kind. Notice, too, that Mr. Worldly Wiseman is all the more dangerous because he is not deceitful. His principles are bad ; but he sincerely thinks them good. If he thought them bad, and sought to make them appear good, his deceit would very soon discover itself. And his influence would be lost. Seldom can deceit keep itself hid ; so that it is a prodigious blunder ever to practise it. But if a man has untruth on his side, and is in dead earnest, he is very dangerous, especially to a sincere neighbour, as anxious to get counsel as the other is to give it.

Worldly Wiseman at once perceives the pilgrim's distress, and makes enquiries. " You're troubled about your sin, are you ? and where, or in what way, are you seeking peace ?" " I am as great a sinner as ever lived," says Christian, " and I am on my way to Christ for relief." Without saying anything about Christ, Worldly Wiseman suggests that Christian might get all he seeks in the bosom of his family. " Are you comfortable at home ?" " Yes, I have as good a wife as any man ever had ; and none can match my sweet babes for kindness, health, and comeliness ; but yet they cannot give me peace, I am as if I had none." " Now, my good fellow, will you take advice ?" " Yes, if it be good ; for I am desperately in need of it." " Then, my advice is, get rid of your sin as soon as you can—you will never be in your right mind till then, nor enjoy the good mercies of God."

“Very true, I want to get rid of it, but I cannot rid myself of it, as I could lay off a suit of wet clothes ; and vain is the help of man. Therefore I am going to Christ to get peace, as I told you.” “Who bid you go to Christ ?” “It was a preacher of the Gospel.” At this point Mr. Worldly Wiseman utters something like an oath. “A curse on that preacher ! Believe me, he has given you the worst direction in the world. Look what it has done for you since you began to follow it ? Instead of bettering you, it made you feel your sin ten times worse. You fell into such deep despondency that it was nearly all over with you, and there you are going on to sorrows greater and more numerous than you have ever had. Now listen to me ; I am an old man, let me teach your inexperience, and tell you what evils you will meet with, if you go on in that way. You may expect every danger and discomfort that can happen to human body and mind,—no enjoyment, no rest, nothing but perpetual doubts and fears, trembling, torment, and the fear of death. I tell you it is true. Listen to a friend, and don’t so carelessly ruin yourself by following an enemy’s advice.”

This is very strong pleading of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, but evidently it has no effect as yet in dissuading Christian from his course. The answer : “Why, sir, speak of dangers and discomforts *before* me, I carry the greatest imaginable *with* me ; I cannot possibly feel any greater evil than my sin, and come what may, I must get rid of it.” “How did you come by it ?”

“By reading the Bible.” “I thought so, like other weak men who, reading what they do not understand, get distracted and hysterical like weak-nerved women, and begin religious pilgrimages in search of they know not what.” “I know what I’m seeking ; deliverance from my sin.” “But why do you seek it in this troublesome and dangerous way ? when you can get it, as I can shew you, in another way with little trouble and little waste of time. Besides freedom from this intolerable sorrow for sin, you will find yourself, I assure you, in perfect safety, in the midst of friends, and blessed with contentment.”

This is a new gospel to poor Christian, and he is deeply concerned to know more about it. “Pray, sir, open this secret to me.” When the wisdom of the world speaks to an awakened and anxious sinner, let us hear what is recommended as a cure for the misery of sin. The best gospel it can think of is this : keep the law to-day, and it will atone for yesterday’s transgression. You will find peace by living in agreement with the laws of good morals. You have a natural conscience. It is the only Bible you need. Act out its dictates as well as you can ; if you fail, try again ; you do your best, and the best can do no better. But even though you find it inconvenient to be very strict in your observance of the moral law, do not be alarmed or discomposed in any way by that slight defect ; for if you be good-natured and affable, and kind and obliging in your manners ; in short, if you be civil, it will not matter so much what your morals are. Civility will do

as well as the old gentleman, Legality himself, if the latter should be from home, when you call as an anxious sinner to find peace.

This is the spirit of Worldly Wiseman's answer to Christian. Go to Morality, he says ; it is only a village, and there are few people in it : call on Legality, a judicious medical man of wide reputation, living there, and practising salvation on persons like you, insantly anxious about their sins. Many a one he has cured ; he will cure you presently, if you go to him, and it is not far. But his sweet young son, Civility, will do as well if father is from home. Now go there, and get peace. Remove your family from Destruction, it is not a good place—settle in Morality—there are some empty houses and cheap, it is cheap living there altogether ; and, besides, to make your happiness complete, you will have honest neighbours, and live amongst them in credit and good fashion.

The sum of it all seems to be this, BE MORAL (keep the law of conscience, and the law of the land, if you can) ; if you cannot, be *mannerly* at least. Be content and happy, if your neighbours are pleased with you. Christian is brought to a stand by the new gospel he has heard. If true, it is certainly the easier way to recover his peace. Worldly Wiseman has infected him ; he begins to reason about his wisest course, forgetful of all that his former teacher told him. He resolved to try. " Which is my way ? " " Yonder," says Worldly Wiseman, pointing to Mount Sinai. " Yes, very well ; " and the poor pilgrim begins to ascend that terrible hill.

The anxious sinner has got the idea lodged in his mind that he can live blamelessly, and make amends for the guilty past by present and future righteousness. He really wants to be spotless ; and expects with a little care to become so, and make his own peace. Let him go on : he has a true sense of sin in him ; it will keep him right : he will get a nearer view of what sin is, and become more closely acquainted with its power, as already he has with its defilement and its danger. He goes on : but makes no progress. He is off his way, not turned back but turned aside. The result, more heaviness, pain, terror. Coming nearer to God's law he only finds how far he is from a perfect obedience. The righteous God appears to him as a consuming fire. Going over that hill the rocks threaten to fall on him ; lightnings like the sword of the Almighty flash before his eyes ; and his burden is heavier than ever.

Worldly Wiseman could walk that road without alarm. Why ? Because he sees only the outer form of sin ; not sin itself. Some have no hope but by the destruction of sin itself. This is the way of Evangelist, who represents the Word of God. " Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me ! " This is what we find Christian doing. He is led to believe that he will get rid of his burden sooner and easier by taking the side course of the worldly wise. He is told that the rational way of getting rid of sin is to abandon it. This seems quite reasonable ; but it leaves the real difficulty out of account. It merely says, get rid of sin by getting rid of it ! Mend your morals

if you can ; if you cannot, mend your *manners* at least. This is the world's wisest way of salvation. Christian tries it. Forgets what Evangelist, the Word of God, said. Takes the way to Sinai, instead of Calvary. We know the result. Instead of finding peace, he almost loses the only hope he has. As he attempts to come nearer Morality, his difficulties, fears, dangers, increase. He will be buried alive or burned to death. The mountain threatens to fall on him, and the fire breaks out on every hand, in apparent eagerness to consume him.

VI

RETURN TO THE NARROW WAY

The reader should be continually reminding himself of the fact that these Bunyan characters are impersonal. They are qualities, pure and simple, viewed in their intrinsic essence, and in the results to which naturally and inevitably they lead. A great deal depends on this view of the case. For instance, it is no cruelty to use a bludgeon against a bad habit, and lay it low in the dust, to rise no more. It can be no lack of charity to make stern refusal of food to pride or vanity, or spurn them from your door if they come there pleading for a night's lodging. Courteous treatment does not apply to a temptation that would rend your soul as your frame might be with a deadly arrow. Bunyan's Christian speaks, as it seems sometimes, with unbecoming sharpness, and harshness, and in a supercilious inquisitorial tone, to those he meets and does not agree with. Under the allegorical conditions, nothing else was possible. No stick is too bad to beat the devil with; and all through his pilgrimage the pilgrim is attempting to beat down the arch-foe, as he appears in styles of infinite variety, more subtle or more open and violent.

Christian is now tempted by the wisest thing the world can say to him. The world said to him : if you can by any means, Be good ; by all means, Do good ; at least, Be civil. Christian tries the plan. It fails signally. Why ? Because he is true, and it is false. No untruth can stand the test of sincerity. A sincere soul will not fail in finding truth, in sifting it from falsehood. We have an instance here. Christian's first name was Careless. Had he tried to reach Morality then, he would have met with few, if any, hindrances. Why ? Because Truth had not yet control over his mind. The spirit was as yet blind, and could not discern the true moral quality of his actions. Sinai was a very quiet hill to Worldly Wiseman for the same reason. He had no difficulty whatever in reaching Morality ; not to say he could live a more moral life than Christian ; but he was more easily satisfied.

But our pilgrim is truly named Christian. He has not yet found Christ, and Him crucified ; but he has chosen the way of God's truth to walk in, the way that leads to Christ ; he is a Christian, though he has not as yet found peace. He has found out the truth as regards himself ; but not yet the truth as it is in Jesus. This attempt of his to reach Morality has taught him not a little. First, in his spiritual education he learned the danger of sin—this made him flee from the City of Destruction ; next, the vileness of sin, when he came the length of the Slough of Despond ; now he learns the strength of sin, by a fair trial of Civility, Morality, Legality. In the use of himself, he is like a workman

with a defective tool : the good work he would fain do, he cannot do ; and the more he tries, the more he is vexed and hindered.

Christian now knows his weakness, insufficiency, guiltiness, sinfulness, more than he ever did. Had this experience come to him in the way of truth, it would have disturbed him less, he would have had more hope. But here he is on Sinai, where he should not have been ; consequently his burden is heavier than it was. He has more fear and less hope than ever : not turned back, but turned aside from Christ. Seeking a righteousness of his own, which he would easily have found (or fancied so) had there been no truth in him ; but because he has some truth in him, the righteousness is not easily made, and the vain task is soon given up in despair. He stood still. Then he began to repent, which he no sooner did than Evangelist was beside him. You notice how seasonably God's aid comes to one who in deep need is really willing to receive it. We are told that a penitent sinner makes Heaven glad. Heaven therefore will not be slow to help the penitent back to the way of life and peace. Evangelist is God's mouth, with the exact word in it fitted to give peace to an anxious sinner. He represents God's Gospel. You remember it was when the pilgrim was standing still before, that Evangelist came to him, just when he had left Destruction, and did not know where to turn. Coming to a stand a second time, God's Gospel truth is at hand immediately to help and deliver him. The approach of Truth first makes his cheek crimson with shame, and then pale with fear.

As Evangelist drew nearer the pilgrim sees that he has on a severe and dreadful countenance. God's love can never look on transgression otherwise.

When Evangelist first met the pilgrim, near Destruction, he pointed out the way of salvation to him. "Do you see the gate?" "No." "The light?" "Yes." "Well, keep that light in your eye, and you will come to the Gate." Sincerely act up to the light you have, and it will lead you straight to Christ. But the pilgrim had ceased to look to that light, and was attracted by another, which promised to lead him in an easier way. Notice in what follows how the truth searches and tries him severely, before giving comfort, and restoration to the right way. You cannot blame the light for making bad appear bad. Evangelist, by his searching enquiries, leads Christian to a review of every step of his transgression. He is very exact in his questions, needlessly and triflingly, so we should think, if we did not remember that he represents God's saving truth. First bringing the sinner to a full consciousness of his error, before correcting it. The world's help, like God's, is offered seasonably. Had not Christian just come out of deep Despondency he would not have been so readily led astray. But he was ready at the moment to try any means rather than meet a like misfortune again.

Morality is only a village. The morals of few people are fit to give them a lodging outside the City of Destruction. It is a sad truth, more confirmed the more it is investigated, that there are very few strictly moral

men, even amongst those who talk most on the value of morality, and enjoy in the general public unblemished reputations. Most astounding are the revelations sometimes made when a respectable citizen dies, or when by accident perhaps a police officer or city missionary gets a glimpse into his secret doings. And these are frequently the men who call faith in Christ's Cross foolishness, as a means of deliverance from sin. Morality is a village still, in proportion much the same as when Bunyan lived. Smitten by repeated strokes of the sword, the Word of God, Christian falls like one dead. "Cast down ; but not destroyed." The same hand that wounds, heals. Nothing can wound or smite us so severely as the truth ; nothing but the truth can ever heal a wound. Nothing is more pitiful than the truth. It never gives an unnecessary pang, or a pang that is not directly fitted to save us from a worse pain. All that Truth ever says is Gospel, be it well or ill received.

It reveals to Christian these two errors into which he has fallen. The sin of preferring man's word to God's. The sin of seeking salvation otherwise than by faith. How very sensitive he is under the touch of Truth ! One who has not passed through a similar experience is apt to think this greatly exaggerated or unreal. But it is with the spirit as with the body. If the body is in disorder, it is extremely sensitive to changes of temperature. A very gentle current of cold air makes a sick person shiver. The strong are unaffected by it ; so are the dead. In spiritual things there is

something analagous to this. In this world, we are all spiritually unwell, or dead. The dead are unaffected by God's Word of Truth. The others feel it raise them up or cast them down. They have a real sense of Truth, and it never comes to them without making its presence felt in joy or sorrow. If they read the Bible, or hear it read and preached, there is an inward response to it, which, if they were spiritually quite well, would always be of an agreeable kind. Bunyan's reference here, mainly at least, is to the Christian's Cross, not Christ's. Worldly Wiseman was opposed to all penitential moanings over sin. He thought it silliness, and quite uncalled for. A life of self-denial, self-renunciation, and crucifixion, such as Christianity required, was a most miserable life, unprofitable, unreasonable.

Of course he could not but regard Christ's Cross as not at all required for atonement or righteousness, since one could make a righteousness for himself ; and to-day's good behaviour was quite sufficient to make amends for yesterday's transgression. "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all." One link of the chain broken renders it useless. If you offend in one point, it is only because you have not the opportunity if you offend not in every other. Truth at length smiles on the penitent pilgrim. He gets comfort from it. And is set right by it. Less than Truth would have comforted him too soon, given him an ill-founded peace. Happy is he who has God's Evangel to bid him God-speed. The pilgrim is more intent on finding Christ than ever. He never lifts his eye off the Gate, and at last he reaches it.

VII

ENTERING THE WICKET GATE

Now we find Christian at the Gate. The Gate speaks to him. It addresses his eye, and says, "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." These are Christ's words ; therefore the Gate is Christ. He says, "I am the door." A door or gate is an entrance to something or other. An entrance to what, in this case ? Not to heaven ; for Christian is yet far from it. Not to peace. For after entering the Gate he still carries the burden awhile. An entrance to what, then ? To a feeling of safety. He is safe before this, although he does not feel so. He is safe from the moment that he is worthy of being called Christian. And that is when he resolves to follow wherever God may lead for salvation. This happens when, outside the City of Destruction, he hears Evangelist speak (God's mouth), and begins to follow his counsel. From that time he is safe ; but he has a good deal of experience to go through before coming to a sense of safety. He comes *into* this at the Gate. And hence it is said, "The ground is good when you once get in at the Gate." The pilgrim then feels something solid under his feet ; he has a sense of safety, or

an assurance that his present way leads to peace and everlasting life.

He enters into this through the Gate—through Christ. What does his assurance or sense of safety rise from ? From an apprehension of God in Christ as the lover and redeemer of his soul. Hitherto his difficulty has been to believe that God can love him, and forgive his sin. “ I—wicked me—who so abhor myself—how can I be an object of love to the Holy One ? ” This is at first a great difficulty with the awakened sinner. When he comes to a firm persuasion that God loves him, chief of sinners though he be ; is willing to save him (not worth saving in his own eyes), and comes to this persuasion by considering what Christ was and did, he enters at the Wicket Gate, treads on firm ground, and begins to find some positive comfort in his course. At last he gets a sight of God’s Goodwill : a grave person who stands on the other side of the Gate, and questions him for a moment.

The three questions of Goodwill : “ What are you ? what have you been ? what do you wish to be ? ” “ I am poor and needy ; I was careless, I have been awakened to my sin ; I have tried to get rid of it by being good, by doing good, by seeming to do good ; by Legality, Morality, Civility—all in vain ; I am a poor sinner still, more helpless than ever. I come to Christ, just as I am, my thoughts and expectations are all concentrated on Him now, away from myself, and from everything else. I want to be rid of my sin, and everything that flows from it.” This is the state of the

pilgrim at the Gate. In this condition, and in this strain, he prays again and again, no doubt with increasing earnestness ; waits patiently, and is at length admitted.

THE SMOKING FLAX.

I'll seek the rich man's gate no more :

Lo ! here I see a humble door

Along this narrow road :—

I'll turn aside,—perchance it may

Give access to a castaway

Into a friend's abode.

I have no home, no resting here,

No hand to help, no friend to cheer,—

I'm weary of this world of sin ;

O let me in ! O let me in !

Hungry, I have no bread to eat ;

Naked to Winter's wind and sleet ;

Sore head above, sad heart within,—

O let me in ! O let me in !

If thou hast pity left in thee

For a poor wastrel soul like me,

Good watchman, if it be no sin,

O let me in ! O let me in !

Hush, stranger ! cease thy useless prate,

Dost thou not know King Christian's gate ?

Think'st thou to grace, foul, wretched thing !

The marriage banquet of the King ?

O sir, I ask—and that is all—

The crumbs that from His table fall ;

Good watchman, if it be no sin,

O let me in ! O let me in !

Ah ! tremble not ; cast off thy fear,—
Meek soul, thou art thrice welcome here ;
Behold King Christian's open door
To welcome rest for evermore !

The feast awaits thee ; take thy place
'Neath the bright shining of His face ;
He knows the sorrows thou hast had,
And his long-waiting heart is glad !

It is a wicket gate, made of a few dry sticks, having no form or comeliness, like Christ in the world's eye. The gate of heaven is splendid ; this gate is lowly, and with no earthly attractions. Multitudes pass it by without even noticing it, and more often it is noticed only to be despised. “ Few there be that go in thereat.” Although there are few words more often used than “ Christian,” Christ Himself is after all very little heeded. The crowd pass by the wicket gate, and see it not, or see it to regard it only as the entrance to some bypath.

Goodwill gives Christian a pull ; rude treatment it would seem no doubt to the poor pilgrim. He did not know his danger. It was good that another knew it, and provided for it. His pace needed to be quickened at that moment. The pull was absolutely necessary. Better it was to be (for his good) a little roughly handled by his friend, than stricken down by his enemy. Satan was near, his bow was bent, his arrow was on the wing ; and but for the rapid step Christian was *compelled* to take, it would have pierced him. You are surprised that God should afflict you when you are seeking Him

so earnestly ; and you ask, as Christian did, " What means that ? " In your holiest moments you will often be most sorely tempted to commit the vilest sins. When you escape by means of an unexpected affliction, rejoice and tremble.

The pilgrim is now standing on good ground inside the strait gate. He entered the gate, when, from what he saw in Christ, he became firmly persuaded that God loved him in spite of his sins. The moment of coming to that persuasion of entering the gate was, as we have seen, one of great danger. The arrows of unbelief from the tempter's bow were on the wing. What happens then ? A retrospect of the past. Formerly he was more driven by fear on his course, from this point he is more drawn by love. Joy begins when faith in the love begins. He has patiently endured the trial of his faith, and now the sorrow is beginning to dawn into a noontide of joy. He has sown in tears of truth and penitence, and now reaps first-fruits with gladness.

Notice here again the truth that a Christian, or truly awakened person, can find no sinner worse than himself, and for the simple reason that with the eyes of Truth he can see himself more narrowly than anyone else. God's love is neither given nor withheld from us on account of what we do or have done. He loves us because He made us, and for what He made us, for our humanity simply, a thing which cannot be increased or diminished in us. Therefore God loves us with an everlasting love. The jewel is as valuable in the dust as in the king's crown ; but not so happy. Notice the

difference between God's love and God's peace. His love will not leave us, however great our sins. By what we do, we earn or forfeit His peace : not His love. We cannot purchase His love ; neither can we lose it, though by our sin we may give it great pain. What a wonderful thing is this love of God,—it passeth knowledge. It embraces all ; it casts out none.

Once in at the strait gate the pilgrim has a narrow way before him to walk in. Once persuaded through Christ of God's love, his future life is devoted to the pleasing of that love. This is a narrow way. It is not broader than one aim, one motive, one rule, one example. The aim, God's glory ; the motive, God's love ; the rule, God's Word ; the example, God's Son. " I am the Way," says Christ. There never was a human being so narrow as Christ. His one object—His meat and drink—was to do the Father's will, or, in other words, to please God's love. He did it perfectly, and hence the narrow way is said to be as straight as a rule can make it. Christ never swerved from the right line of pleasing the Father's love. There is only one right way. The ways of unrighteousness are innumerable. You can draw only one right line, or straight line, between two points. You may draw as many crooked ones as you please.

If a human life has not the love of God regulating it, it must needs be crooked. One may be consistently devoted to the love or service of another creature, as Cardinal Wolsey is represented to have been to his king ; but the result will always be, as in his case, a

very wide divergence from the way of rectitude and peace. When we become convinced that God loves us, we enter the strait gate; when we steadfastly set ourselves to please that love, we are walking in the narrow way, and going as straight as possible to perfect peace and life eternal. The other ways are wide, with any amount of room and company.

The pilgrim had not yet a sense of sin forgiven. He wished it; God's Goodwill did not refuse, but told him to wait. A little more knowledge and experience, and the burden of distress for sin would fall off. He had to come to the Cross first. It is not enough to believe in God's Goodwill merely. God has shewn something more than that. He has made a sacrifice for sin. The pilgrim must become acquainted with God's work of redemption done in that way, and believe in it. If one believes in God's love truly, he will be soon led to see *THAT* love suffering in the Cross of Christ. Only *then* may he expect to feel the burden lightened on himself, when he sees it so heavy on suffering Love. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." When I see God suffering for my sin, I know not how, and believe Him when He declares that my guilt, by that suffering, is atoned for, I begin to feel the joy of one who is guiltless. Assured of God's love, the pilgrim is now about to enter more into God's truth. He is directed to the Interpreter's house, where he will be entertained with "excellent things." He is now getting good cheer in his Christian course. He girds up his loins like a man of spirit, and addresses himself to his journey with light

step and eager eye. He has tasted the sweetness of God's truth, and he wants more. Persuaded of God's love to him, he begins to be himself smitten with the love.

VIII

THE INTERPRETER'S HOUSE

1

Christian's next stage is the house of the Interpreter. Feeling assured of God's goodwill towards him personally, he wants to know more of the will that he may taste more of the *goodness*. He is like one who has just found out the place where a hidden treasure lies. He has been told there is a treasure there, and a treasure for him. He has been made quite sure of it. Without a moment's delay, therefore, he begins to search for it, using all the means in his power.

To one who really believes in God's goodwill, it opens up a field of intense and boundless interest. Is God's will so good? Towards me personally? I have an intense longing to know what it is. I cannot rest till I search into the mind of God, for I am sure there is lying there, for me, a rich world of undiscovered good. Who is to help him to find this? The Interpreter. How find the Interpreter? By asking for him, over and over. Who is the Interpreter? The Spirit. "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." What is his house? The Temple of Truth, designed and built by God's goodwill, or the love of God.

You notice that the love of God leads to its own Interpreter. Goodwill sends Christian on, and he is not far on till he experiences an outpouring of the Spirit. He comes to the door of the Interpreter's house, and after knocking repeatedly, he gets some evidence of his being heard. One came and asked him who he was. Christian prays for the Spirit, and the first result is self-examination. The questions, Who am I? and What do I want? are brought home to him. We are not told who it was that first addressed Christian at the Interpreter's gate. Truth has many servants; there are many ministering angels that help us heavenwards. They give us holy impulses. They are aids to reflection of a religious kind. Lead us to think more of what we are in the eyes of Truth, and of what we need. They are servants in the House of Truth. But Truth is a person; and the Christian soul wants to feel hand in hand, heart to heart, with him. I am a pilgrim, he says; I am seeking good which I am told awaits my coming to it. I want to speak with the Master of the house.

After a short while of waiting, the Master comes to Christian and examines him. It is a good thing that Christian has nothing to conceal. He is perfectly sincere, and gives a simple account of how it stands with him, and what he would have. This is childlike. Except ye become so, ye shall not enter. In our prayers, unless we tell God all, we need tell Him nothing. I mean, that if we keep back part of the truth, tell God only what we think will please Him, we are playing false with Him;

and it will result in no good. Of the Interpreter's gate, as of the gate of heaven, it may be said, "There entereth nothing that defileth or that maketh a lie." If Christian entered with his sins on his back, they were not in his heart. He had a heart sincerely hating sin, and loving righteousness; but he had not yet a sense of sin forgiven. He still felt as if it were lying *on him*, as the fruit of his former life, not *in him*. "I want to come in," he says, "for I have been told you have excellent things to shew me, that will help me on my journey."

Then said the Interpreter, "Come in." Christian here feels for the first time in very presence of the Master of the House, Truth's Temple. He has been led by the Spirit hitherto mediately, now immediately, hand in hand, heart to heart. Truth is not now merely a conviction in his heart, it is a person by his side. The Spirit itself now begins to bear witness with his own spirit. He realises the Divine Presence as truly as his own. A new light breaks in on all things to him. All things, as it were, become new. This is a most happy experience. Multitudes do not believe in it. Multitudes cannot doubt it because they have felt it. They have felt an outpouring of the Spirit upon them, and awakened up to find the Spirit Himself standing beside them, and offering to lead them through His House, or, in other words, into all Truth.

He commanded his man to light the candle. This candle represents the Bible. Until the Spirit command it, the Bible is an unlighted candle. To the carnally

minded it has only at best the mere form of a light-bringer. To them it is a book of riddles, a dark lantern, with light in it indeed, but the shade down. Bible truth is spiritually discerned. It can no more be seen without the Spirit than the letter of it can be read without eyes. God's Spirit is the eye of our own ; or if not, we are blind to God's Truth. That is, God's saving truth. A carnal man may understand parts of the Bible as well as any. The truth that Nimrod was a mighty hunter, or that Cæsar Augustus decreed all the world to be taxed, the unending puzzle of dates and authorship, he may apprehend sufficiently ; but these, and such as these, are not Bible truth proper. They are, or might have been, set down in mere human records. Bible truth proper is that which never could have been known to man, unless through its revelations, the underlying spirit of saving truth that runs through and at the bottom of it all. It is God's Saviour character in the Book, His goodwill or willingness to save sinners, that makes Bible truth proper. And it is that which cannot be discerned unless by the Spirit. What God has said, done, suffered, in the way of saving man : what man is, and needs, has done, and is destined for—these are treated in the Bible, and these things are called the things of the Spirit of God, which the natural man calls foolishness ; neither can he know them, it is said, because they are spiritually discerned.

Christian has been led somewhat by the Spirit from the very first ; now, however, he has more personal and special intercourse than he ever enjoyed. The

candle is lighted, and he is taken into the private room of the Interpreter ; he is, as it were, closeted with the Spirit of God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Christian's burden was no objection to Interpreter. The Holy Spirit in such close fellowship with a guilty sinner ! Yes, because he is sincerely penitent. His sin therefore, though a great burden on his mind, is yet in God's sight as far from him as east is from west. Why does God allow it to remain ? Because the removal of it just then would not accomplish so much good as its continuance. The Cross is not yet so full of meaning to Christian as it must soon be, and then when he glories in Christ, but especially in Him crucified, the sense of pardon will be given. In the meantime he is in close fellowship with the Spirit, as a private pupil ; by the lighted candle getting glimpses of precious truth that will be of great use to him on the way.

The first lesson he learns is in regard to the kind of man he should have to interest him in Divine things. There will be many preachers who are either false at heart, or in their teachings ; and so attractive, that if not on his guard he will surely be led astray by them. In the Interpreter's private room a door is opened, and the pilgrim sees a picture of a Divinely approved preacher of the Gospel. Heaven is in his eye, the Bible in his hand, truth on his lips, the world behind his back. He is like one who pleads, and the crown is ready for his head. In

the man these things may be taken to represent faith, utterance, knowledge, self-denial, love, assurance. He has faith in the Truth, He knows it, is able to utter it, willing to sacrifice all for it, loves those who are perishing for want of it, and fights for it like one certain of victory.

Next a picture of the human heart in its natural condition is given. "A very large parlour." The first characteristic mentioned is its capaciousness. "Very large." It has great capacity of joy or sorrow—capable of great intensity of feeling. This is true of every human heart. Some have greater capacity than others, but the capacity of all is very great. Every human heart is an eternity in length. It is a very wide place, this parlour; in which most of our daily common life is spent. Our affections are so widely diffused, and they shall never cease in their activity for ever, for good or evil. When we speak of the heart, we mean the state of feeling in which a person is; it is very large, because our likings and dislikings extend to so many experiences and vicissitudes of life, and may be so intense.

The second characteristic of the natural heart: "full of dust." It is not clean. However, at first you notice the dust lies perfectly still,—the uncleanness is not at all uncomfortable. The heart is then saying peace to itself when there is no peace. The Spirit of God comes, and He is not long present till a change takes place. Interpreter sees the true condition of the heart, and makes it to be seen and felt. He orders his man to sweep, then the dust rises to suffocation. He

does not make the dust ; but makes it known. This is what God's Spirit does, by means of the law. Makes sin appear sin to the sinner. Stirs up the dust in the heart—the uncleanness. This is not agreeable ; very unpleasant. And, if possible, the heart would rather be let alone. The sinner has no objections to his sin if it does not pain him ; but when the law comes, pain comes, and then the guilty sinner, instead of blaming the sin for his pain, will often blame the law. God's law is a detective ; from whom no sin or sinner can escape. It makes no false charges ; it overlooks none ; it finds out everyone and everything. It makes no charge weaker or stronger than it should be. It is vain to flee from it. If dust (or sin) exists in the heart, be sure the law will one day raise it.

But the law cannot remove it. Sin is not cured simply by being exposed ; it will only seek to gain its ends by more secret and cunning ways. The thief, when caught in the act, and brought to justice, is very far from thanking the detective who seized, and the magistrate who sentenced him, for the service they have wrought on him. They have by righteousness only strengthened his heart in wickedness. The natural result of mere law-dealing with the transgressor is to make him feel as if the law were his enemy. Its righteousness is hateful to him. Just as the mere sweeping of a room where the dust lies thick in peaceful layers, makes the room less comfortable than it was, changes it only from bad to worse. But sprinkle a little water on the floor, and the work of cleaning the

room will be done pleasantly and well. This the Interpreter shews to Christian. What the Interpreter's man could not do alone with all his strength, his little maid accomplishes by shaking a few drops of water from her delicate fingers. The strong man is the law ; the damsel is the Gospel. They are both needed ; they work to one another's hands. Different kinds of forces. The man drives. The maid draws. The one raises fear and anger : the other, by the softly winning arts of love, allays the fear, and soothes the irritation. They represent God's law, and God's love, or Gospel. If the love come first to you, it will come only to be despised. Unconvinced of sin, the love of God will not move you ; but let law come first, and shew you what you are in the eye of truth and righteousness, vile and despicable, then let love come with meek, soft, wet eyes, and welcome you just as you are, and you will be scarce able to resist. Your sin is put out of countenance by a love that can so sweetly forgive it.

O, how dreadful it would be if we had a God all eyes to see our sin, all light to shine upon it, and with no heart to love us nevertheless ! How bitterly we would hate Him, and He us ! But He is not so. He is all eyes to see, and all light to expose our sin, and at the same time all love to forgive the sin, if it is repented of. A hard unsympathising nature, whose righteousness rebukes your sin, does not draw you from it, or shame you out of it ; in secret only gives you pain, and repels you ; but a nature like God's, whilst it gives you conviction, works conversion also. When you feel assured

that He loves you still, in spite of your sin, which wounds and bruises His love, but does not change it, your heart is melted by His sufferings, His long-sufferings, your eyes flow with tears, and you flee, a new creature, into His bosom. When you come to see that He has Himself borne the penalty you merited for sin, you believe in His love, and trust in it all the more, because based on the Rock of His righteousness.

If you know that one loves you ignorantly, for qualities which you do not possess, you cannot prize his love much,—in secret you reject it ; but if a just one who knows your infirmities most, yet loves you best, that love is precious to you, and will act powerfully upon you for good. This is the love of God, announced to us in His Gospel. It is the only way in which the human heart can be purified.

The Interpreter next takes Christian from the parlour to the nursery, a little room with two children, each in his chair. Their names—Passion and Patience : in other words, *my* will and *Thy* will. Passion will have his own will ; Patience will wait on God's will. They are represented as children, I suppose, because it is their nature to grow greater and stronger as time goes on. The one is a very restless child, desiring everything, and pleased with nothing. The father has given a promise, Passion wants possession, and despises the promise. Heaven and eternal life are in the promise ; the world and the present life are all that Passion craves. He is represented as getting these, the bag of treasure, is vastly pleased with his prize, laughs his

patient neighbour to scorn ; but in a little while the treasure is gone, nothing but the bag left, and that is in rags. The laughter is gone, for death has come : the world is lost, life is lost, and what then ? Passion still, but nothing to enjoy but its own unsatisfied, miserable self. “ My will be done ! ” “ Amen, so it is,” replies eternity.

The other child is Godlike. For God is more patient than any of His creatures. Patience lays up treasure in heaven. He seeks what is best ; he knows that he will get it ; he is sure also that when he gets it, it will never be taken away from him. The Father's will is everything with him. He is laughed at for not catching the unclean bird of worldly enjoyments within his reach. Passion cannot understand his strange ways ; mocks and pities poor Patience ; who in course of time stands at the death bed of his unhappy neighbour, to see the mockery, as well as the pleasures of Passion, cease for ever. And at his own death, Patience loses only his troubles, and finds the substance of eternal joy, of which his best earthly happiness—which has not been little—was only to be reckoned as the shadow.

IX

THE INTERPRETER'S HOUSE

2

There are seven pictures in Interpreter's gallery as shewn to Christian. We have looked at three : let us glance at the remaining four. They are shewn Christian in a methodical way. First, Interpreter shews his own portrait (something like it), or the picture of a man full of the Spirit, and doing the Spirit's work. Then, as the first result of that work, the picture of a human heart awakened to a sense of its true condition, like a large room full of dust, stirred up by law, purified by Gospel. Then comes a picture of the patience needed, for the on-carrying of that good work. Then of the grace that sustains the patience. Then of the hard struggle which must be made, even with the grace. Then of the hopelessness in which one is left who gives up the struggle. And finally, the judgment, when the wrath to come is come. We have looked at the three pictures of the good preacher ; of the impure heart and the only mode of cleansing it ; and of the patient waiting whereby the purifying work is done. We have now before us, a picture of the grace, as much needed to sustain the patience as the patience is to sustain the grace.

Interpreter takes Christian by the hand. The Spirit itself and our spirit, like parent and child, hand in hand, the one leading, the other led, into all truth. Christian is shewn a fire burning against a wall,—the fire unquenched by all the water than can be thrown on it. Indeed, it only becomes higher and hotter. It seems miraculous. Christian is amazed ; knows not where the fire gets its life, its increasing life. It is all made plain by a glance at the other side of the wall—there a man pours oil on the fire secretly. More water on the one side, more oil on the other. The oil is stronger than the water, and the fire increases. This represents God's love in the heart, interest in God's things because they are His. Christ kindles the fire and keeps it up. The devil tries to quench it. He has many hands in this earth, all used in throwing cold water on Christians' zeal. Seeking to withdraw the interest of the soul from God to something else. A man feels deep interest, or is beginning to feel interest, in some work of God in himself or others ; what does Satan do ? He does not repress the interest, but he withdraws it from eternity to time, from soul to body, from the Bible to the newspaper, from the church to the world. This is what he seeks to do : tries to cool down the Divine fire, and kindle one of his own. He is quite content if men be only indifferent ; that will serve his purpose as well as if they were profligates. But Christ keeps the fire burning. His grace is stronger than the wiles of the devil. The sincere disciple will often wonder where his strength comes from ; his fire may be very low,

his astonishment is that it is not out altogether. Christ pours in the oil of grace, even when it is not asked or desired. For be the soul's interest in its own salvation ever so great, it is less than His who died for it.

GRACE.

Fed from heavenly sources,
Where God's river runs
Down through myriad courses
Of the trembling suns,

In the soft green meadow
Grows the Flower of Grace ;
And the yew tree shadow
Falls upon the place.

Odour sweet it sendeth
On the air around ;
And the fair head bendeth
Towards the dewy ground.

Say, oh lonely weeper,
In the twilight hour,
While the dark grows deeper,
Knowest thou this Flower,

With its breath of healing
Breathed for human woe ;
Fragrant peace, revealing
More than angels know ?

Yes !—this Flower hath crowned thee,—
Joyfully it flings
Love's aroma round thee
With its viewless wings !

Next, Christian is entertained with a representation of the Kingdom of Heaven, and how it is to be reached. A noble palace delights his eye, with people clad in gold on its battlements. Crowds are at the gateway, desirous of going in, but not brave enough. Those who enter must first register their names with a secretary at a table not far from the gate, and then fight their way through a band of armed men in the doorway of the palace, and determined to keep every one out if they can. Most of the bystanders are in too great fear of these to venture an attempt at entrance, until at length Christian sees one man, of determined look, register his name at the table, and then with sword and helmet, resolutely face the opposition to his entrance ; he gives and receives many wounds, and at last cuts his way in, where he is most pleasantly welcomed by the glorified inhabitants, and made like them in glory.

The teaching here is that Heaven cannot be entered without a struggle, without suffering, and tribulation. Let no one think that because Christ keeps the fire burning in spite of the water thrown on it by the devil, that therefore he need make no exertion himself. The evidence of inward fire is conflict with sin. If Christ works the work, fights the fight, gains the victory, it is not independently of the believer, but in and through the believer. The first thing needed is decision. "Set down my name, sir." This is done at a table not far from the palace ; the Lord's table, no doubt where one makes an open profession of his discipleship, and buckles on his armour. Next comes the battle. The Christian

has to fight through hosts of hindrances on the way to Heaven. Resisting unto blood, if need be, striving against sin. Enduring hardness as a good soldier. The description of the Christian's determination is very forcible, "cutting and hacking most fiercely." What earnestness in that man's eye, how great heavenly and eternal realities must have appeared to him, and how little comparatively the best and most legitimate pleasures of time and sense !

Is his resolution and his pain yours ? If you have the one you will be sure to have the other. One who enters into nothing of Christ's sufferings for sin, will never enter into his joy. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God." What happens if the soul partakes of the grace without partaking in the conflict, we see illustrated next.

Christian was wishing to go on his way with no more teaching than he had. A young scholar feels more proficient than an older one. Ignorance cries "enough," knowledge, "more." The one attempts the work long before it can. The other will scarce make the effort even when it can. Stay, says the Interpreter to Christian, till I have shewed thee a little more. Then Christian is led into a very dark room, where a man sits in an iron cage, the picture of hopeless wretchedness. This represents a man in despair. He has had the oil of God's grace poured in on the fire of his religion ; but he carelessly left the fire to itself, did not stir it up, fought no fight for it, and now the fire has gone out. His room

is very dark, the picture of his soul ; he cannot move to another ; in an iron cage, no prisoner of hope is this. A fair and flourishing professor once, to himself and others. Became careless, then frivolous, then he took freely what pleasures suited him, left God, as it were to attend to his own business. Fed his vanity and pride with God's holy gifts ; abused God's light ; vexed God, who so loved him ; and wooed the devil, who was easily won. Hardened his heart till it was past repentance. This man continued in sin, presuming on God's grace, until the grace, becoming a means of hardening him, was in mercy withdrawn, and he was left alone with his hardness. This is a fearful picture of intense misery and impenitence. The man does not repent ; knows perfectly what he has done ; and what has brought him into his present state. Why did God's mercy and love allow him to go so far ? They did not allow him to go one step. He went in spite of them.

He would have his own way. He promised himself much delight in worldly pleasures and profits, the very things which now make everlasting burning within him. If you ask, is it possible for one to fall away from the Christian faith, the answer is YES ; if he likes he may. If he has a mind to continue in sin, he may. Even Christ cannot save him against his will. May one who has been born again fall away ? If such a one could possibly find pleasure in sin, he might. But one born again has Christ in him, and he can no more find pleasure in sin than Christ can, or continue in the indulgence of it. The lesson of this fearful picture is—

Since Christ clings in love to you, you must cling likewise to Him. No safety otherwise. Would you desire safety without love to Christ, and likeness to Christ? Let us always reckon ourselves on the brink of despair, if we find ourselves indifferent to Christ, or what belongs to Him. What produces that? Sloth, vain confidence, frivolous pleasures, world's cares, greed of this world's gain, and such like. We are told to work out our own salvation, as if it all really depended on our efforts; if the work of salvation depends on God, let us remember that God works in us both to will and to do. So that any one may well be alarmed, frightened for despair, who is not conscious of any Divine working in his soul, or not conscious of a desire for the continuance and completion of that work.

Next comes (and last) a picture of the Judgment. Christian again asks to get on his way. Tarry till I shew one thing more, says Interpreter. A man is represented rising from bed in great fear and trembling. Why? Because he imagines the day of Judgment has come, and he is evidently not prepared for it. He has been dreaming that it had come, and the dream seems to have had much of the force of reality. In his dream he saw Christ come to judgment; all nature was in convulsion, and at the blast of the trumpet the dead were raised, and judged from the open Book in the hands of the Son of Man. The tares are burned; the wheat saved. The useless lost; the useful saved. The pit opens at his feet. He is left when others are carried up to heaven. His sins all come up to mind—the Books

are opened—and the Judge keeps His eye on him. He cannot flee; he cannot hide. That eye of the Omniscient! A lover's eye, a rejected lover,—the countenance of the Lamb darkened with indignation. Very powerful is this representation of the truth. The most dreadful thing imaginable is to have ever on you the eye of a lover, whom you have injured, when the opportunity of doing him kindness or service is gone for ever. This is perhaps what is implied in the wrath of the Lamb. Let me never forget that the Judge has always His eye upon me: that Judge whose name is Love.

Some never dream of judgment before it comes. Think no more of it than of their sins. But the sin is a prophecy of the judgment to come; as the seed sown is of something that will spring from it. If sin is judged by our own conscience, it is surety of it being judged by ONE greater, the Lord and Maker of conscience. Notice, that Christian by these awful pictures of despair and judgment to come, is increased in godly fear, and made more capable of Divine comfort. How much more precious Christ is to him when he sees that there is nothing else between him and despair; and he is stimulated the more to please Christ, because He shall be his Judge. "The Comforter be always with thee, good Christian!"

THE BURDEN FALLS AWAY AT THE CROSS

One man reads these articles with intense interest, the writer of them ! Personally, practically, he has passed through it all ; excepting, of course, the cold river. He is on familiar ground at every step. Some speak of Bunyan as a fanatic ; Macaulay, in midst of his adulations, does so ; but the poor tinker stands, and ever will stand, at the elevation of an archangel in the spiritual world, when the other remains, or vanishes, as a mere lifeless clod in that same sphere. Bunyan, in truth, was a more sensible man, and less of a fanatic, than any of his generation. Bunyan was right ; he stood, and stands for ever, for the unseen and eternal things. A cultured friend once said to me he never could read “ The Pilgrim’s Progress ;” to him it conveyed no meaning ; but what a blessing to him, poor man, if it had ! He was a good man, in a way ; and devoted to the interests of his church ; but what a dreary blank the whole realm of the spirit must have been to him, and yet all-unconsciously ! My own experience at the Cross was exactly like the pilgrim’s. A mystery of relief came to me. The burden was gone ; and an ecstasy of peace,

“passing all understanding,” came down like heavenly dew. An inexplicable, but not unintelligible, experience. No one can tell how it happens ; but had it not been the fact that millions of pious souls in all the Christian ages were secretly touched with this miraculous power, the symbol of the Cross in art, in architecture, in hymnology, in the ritual and ordinances of all-existing churches would have been out of existence long ago. Some men chatter about the Cross who, seemingly, have not the faintest idea of its secret spiritual power. Others, conscious of their defect, talk not of it until they know better what they have to talk about. It is, however, Ignorance, “the curse of God,” that is always most eager, and ample, and assured, in its explanations and expatiations on this mysterious and momentous theme.

Note Interpreter’s parting word to the pilgrim : “The Comforter be always with thee, good Christian !” As if Interpreter had said, “You are leaving my house, but not ME.” Interpreter is Truth’s name, and Truth is Comforter’s name. Ye are clean through the word of Truth. Let it dwell in you richly, until your soul by sincerity becomes as a clear crystal. Then your comfort will have something solid to rest on. It will be always with you.

Christian comes to the Cross at last, and finds peace. On a height in his path, he sees a Cross, at the foot of which his burden falls, and disappears in a sepulchre near. The Cross represents Christ’s sufferings ; the sepulchre, His death. When the sin-burdened soul comes, as it were, face to face with these realities, and

gazes believingly upon them, it enters into peace. This is not theory ; but matter of fact. Part and parcel of the world's history ; as much as the existence of Julius Cæsar or the Duke of Wellington. Part of the world's natural history, as veritable as that fire burns, and water wets, and frost freezes. Numberless persons have made experiment of faith in the Cross, the sufferings and death of Christ, and have found it the power of God unto salvation. They have found peace in this way to their guilty consciences, and felt the beginning of a Divine life in their souls. " It was very surprising, but true."

What does faith in the Cross mean ? An entire reliance on Christ as suffering for sin instead of us, and by His death renewing and preserving our life, or eternal blessedness. The pilgrim experiences here for the first time a sense of forgiveness. He began to feel comfort when he entered the strait gate (through Christ), came to a persuasion that God loved him, in spite of his sins. He came on to Interpreter's hands, believing in God's love ; Interpreter made him feel more than ever his need for mercy, and also assurance that it was to be found by stedfast adherence to the truth. Now Christian feels the mercy and the love ; they are not objects of faith, but matters of experience. " He hath given me rest by His sorrow, and life by His death." He actually realised the peace for which Christ endured the chastisement ; and the healing which His stripes have made. There was a mystery about his deliverance which Christian could not fathom. He was enraptured

with joy, and lost in wonderment. He stood and gazed at the Cross, with no power to do anything but weep. Three angels came, each with a separate gift, and all with the salutation or gift of peace. One gives him pardon; another, a consecrated life; another, assurance of his salvation, by the witnessing of the Divine Spirit with his own. Christian is not converted here; one might say he is born again; made a new creature, in the sense that he has now become partaker of the substance of things which previously were hoped for. He was converted when he first turned his face Godward, and his back to the world: began to seek the truth with all his heart and soul. Now that he has found the truth which as a sinner he needs most, and feels freed by it from the weight and terrors of sin, he is a new man, one born again. The Spirit—the Interpreter—has done it. The secret of the Lord is with him; the Divine peace and joy.

We find Christian immediately seeking to bring others into the same happy experience. We may suppose Bunyan here intends to shew us the main things that hinder professedly Christian people from being born again, coming to a sense of pardon, and assurance of salvation. Their names are Simple, Sloth, and Presumption. He represents Christian meeting three persons so named in the neighbourhood of the Cross, lying asleep in a hole, a little out of the way, and fettered. “A little”—notice that. It is people who are very near the mark, that are often most difficult to bring up to it. You have more difficulty with the best

of Pharisees than with the worst of publicans and sinners. Christian pleads in downright earnest. Tells them that they are at the jaws of the hungry sea, and the teeth of the lion. They look at him, and think him crazed. Simple sees no danger. Sloth sees it at a distance. Presumption is too proud to be advised by any one. Mere silliness, want of thought, is the hindrance of some. Procrastination, of others. Pride, of others. One puts aside, simperingly, the most awful realities of life here and hereafter. Another is too busy every day, and intends to seek salvation every morrow. Another perversely neglects the matter because advised to attend to it; too proud to be thought willing to follow even good advice. Even Christian people may be found among these fettered sleepers; and it gives us the reason why they find little or no peace in their religion.

The pilgrim enlarges his experience of professing Christians. Simple, Sloth, and Presumption are all Christian professors; they would be greatly offended if you regarded them as anything else. And yet, very likely, if their portraits, without their names attached, were held up before them, they would be the first to find fault with the Christian imperfections in the features. In the daylight there is more darkness inside our houses than out; we can see the outside of our neighbour's house better than the inside of our own. Accordingly, Simple condemns his neighbour's simplicity; Sloth, his neighbour's sloth; Presumption, his neighbour's pride. Simple sees no need for being serious in religion; Sloth will be serious in good time;

Presumption is too proud to manifest any seriousness. Christian tries to awaken, counsel, and help these ; but in vain. Simple laughs at him ; Sloth pities him ; Presumption gets angry with him ; all together they sink down to sleep again. And Christian goes on his way, his sadness not now, as hitherto, for himself so much, as for his hardened fellow-men.

He goes not far till he meets two who are not at all sleepy in their religion, quite a contrast to the three whom he had just left. They are uncommonly active ; and shew great agility in overcoming difficulties. They come tumbling over the wall, some distance behind Christian, and on the left hand of the road ; but they make good speed once they are in the narrow way, and make up apace to Christian. Their names are Formalist and Hypocrisy. They are companions, and appear to agree very well together. Good old friends, if the friendship between such can really be worthy of the name. You find them together on that side of the wall, and on this ; in the narrow way and out of it ; in the church and in the world. Some come into the church not by conviction, or by the strait gate of experience, but come tumbling in, as it were, all of a heap over the wall. You meet them one week, and there is no religious tone about them whatever ; you are surprised the next to find that they have suddenly tumbled into church membership. There has been no conscience work in the case ; no sin burden carrying ; no tears ; no penitence ; no faith. They come in on the left hand ; it is a left-handed or crooked policy

that brings them in ; a policy that never yet served the interests of Truth, or the happiness of any creature. However, it may shew well for a time. We find these two left-handed comers into the narrow way making up apace to Christian. Notice, that Bunyan represents some characters in the way of life who are never in it really, but only in appearance.

The Formalist does not mean to deceive. The Hypocrite does. Both are destitute of the Spirit of godliness ; both rigidly adhering to the form ; the one in earnest, the other in pretence. Vainglory is the origin of both ; personal advantage the end and aim of their being. Formalist glories in his forms, which are as vain for life as husks are for food. Hypocrisy glories, not so much in the forms, as in the good name which his adherence to them gains him. He wishes credit for having the Spirit, knowing all the while he has it not. Going for praise to Mount Zion, as if it were a shop to serve the ends of vanity. As well go to the flaming fire to quench your thirst. Truth and Error are not long on the same road without a difference being made plain between them. Truth is aggressive in its character. Error often, on the plea of liberality, will say, let us live in peace, let me alone and I will not trouble you. These are good words, but cannot possibly be acted on. The dry fuel might say to the fire, peace, peace, let us lie beside one another in peace ; I will not harm you, fire, and you will let me alone. No ; fire will not let you alone, unless you put it out of existence. So Truth, as it lives, must act on the offensive towards

Error. Christian begins to search and try his companions. He asks why they did not come in at the Gate. It is usual for our countrymen to take the short cut, is their reply. Can you imagine the vainglorious entering that wicket gate, coming to Christ, trusting to Him, only and entirely? The character of the lowly Nazarene, and the Cross of shame, will be the admiration and hope of the vain, only when water begins to burn.

Formality and Hypocrisy will not be at any trouble in religion, unless their own ends are to be gained. Christ wants us to take the short cut always; but this was the short cut of selfishness. The narrow way from beginning to end is straight as a rule can make it. No shorter cut is possible. Self-seeking is the most round-about way of all of seeking salvation, although to the carnal mind it seems the opposite. "But," says Christian, "the Lord forbids entrance but by the Gate." Their reply is that he should not trouble his head too much about the Lord's will, and just do as they had been doing: follow the custom and teaching of the fathers.

"Will it stand the test at law?" asks Christian. "We expect it will; the custom of entering the church that way is so old that by this time the Lord must reckon it quite right. Use and wont will please the Lord, if it does not suit you to keep the law of His righteousness. And besides, if we get in, it matters not by what means. We are in as well as you. What better are you for entering at the Gate?" Perhaps in these three we have the church visible represented.

The false professors are in the majority. Two to one. They are irreconcilably disagreed. What better are you than we ? Now Christian does not tell what differences there are in spirit between them ; for they could not, being carnally minded, understand these. He simply says that he keeps by the rule of his Master ; whilst they walk by their own fancies.

Formalist and Hypocrisy begin to vilify Christian for not being as punctilious in regard to laws and ordinances as they ; and for wearing another's righteousness rather than his own. Christian takes their reproach kindly, he is rather proud of it.

XI

THE HILL DIFFICULTY

A time of difficulty comes in the way. God's provision for it comes first,—a refreshing spring. A time of trial and testing. Several ways of meeting it. Straight road right up the face of the difficulty. The two others, Hypocrisy and Formality, go seeking some means of avoiding it. As many wrong ways as there are wrongdoers. Christian, before attempting the difficulty, uses God's means of help. The other two come up. This trial both separates the true from the false, and the false from one another. Formalist and Hypocrisy takes each his own low, mean, selfish, cowardly way, hoping to escape the difficulty, and to meet on the other side of it. The one meets Danger, the other Destruction. Formalist finds himself in a pathless wood. Hypocrisy wanders into a land of dark mountains ; no way, no light, and falls there, to rise no more.

Christian takes God's difficulty as it comes, and sets his face to it. He might have taken either of the low roads that seemed to go round it ; but it was principle that led him, not convenience or policy or pleasure. What is God's way ? what is the right thing to do ?

I do not ask what is most pleasant and easy ; I ask what God's will is ; I have sworn allegiance to that will ; and come what may, I stand true to my oath. What may this Hill Difficulty be ? Anything that comes in the straight line between us and the end of our Christian progress. Chiefly a personal thing ; but a teacher may find it too in his troublesome class ; a superintendent in his Sunday School. It may be found in the cares of business ; domestic or family cares ; in the fight of afflictions under sickness or bereavement. One may meet the difficulty in seeking the conversion of beloved friends, the prayer with strong crying and tears may go on for years, and the labour of love with it, without any satisfactory result, with only an increase of discouraging symptoms. Or again, one may meet the difficulty in seeking the mastery over some enslaving habit of folly or wickedness. This, no doubt, is what Bunyan mainly refers to in speaking of the Hill Difficulty. Some hindrance arising from the Christian's own personal state or circumstances.

Look at Christian on the hill. Running first, then walking, then creeping. The difficulty increases as he goes on. It is harder than he thought. Yet, though slow and slower, he does make progress. Neither heart nor flesh have yet failed him. Did he expect the mountain to be made a plain the moment he set his foot on it ? This sometimes happens to the Christian. We are not to expect it always. A great difficulty often vanishes when we come up bravely to grapple with it. The hill

turns out mere mist of imagination. But not always. The hill may prove itself perfectly solid, and more steep and rocky than we imagined. Christian found it so here, and found it to his benefit, no doubt. On level ground he had not had such good and varied exercise, running, walking, clambering on hands and knees. The spirit, like the body, needs variety of exercise for its health and strength. It is good for it to be on its hands and knees occasionally. To run or walk always would be even more tiresome, and far less profitable. What happened to Christian midway in his increasing difficulty? Seasonable help from the Lord. A pleasant arbour to take breath in and rest. Rest for the weary. The Lord opened a well of refreshment for him before the difficulty began. In the midst of it He provided some more refreshment. The Lord will provide. As thy day is, so shall thy strength be. Christian was very happy when he reached this arbour. He had rest, and quiet, shelter from the burning sun, ease to his aching limbs, time to wipe the sweat from his brow, and to gather strength for the rest of the ascent.

The joy is apt to make us forget that only half our difficulty is overcome. This is what happened with Christian here. He sat down, and began to think pleasantly about his assurance; pulled his roll out of his bosom, and admired the change of raiment that had been given him at the Cross. He was proud of his surety of salvation, pleased with Christ's righteousness which he wore, and thus, we are told, pleasing himself

awhile with these sacred things, he forgot that he was only halfway up the hill, forgot his Christian duty in the very enjoyment of his Christian privilege ; began to doze, and from a slumber fell into a fast sleep, wherein his roll dropped from his hand. Poor Christian fell fast asleep, and God's sunshine began to leave him. It was almost night. He imagined himself so safe that he could afford to be careless, to pray less or less fervently, to take his ease, and allow his mind to cease from all anxiety in regard to his soul's good, or God's glory.

Happily he is roused, before dark night sets in, by a text of Scripture. Somehow he sees, or hears it, and starting up hurries to the top of the hill with the utmost speed. Christian, with a few energetic bounds, reaches the top of the hill, surmounts his difficulty, but what then ? He is not the same man he was before his sleep—does not know that yet—he has lost assurance, and immediately, as we should expect, becomes timorous and mistrustful. He begins to be afraid of lions in the way, and begins to lose confidence in God's help. He is tempted to give up his Christian course altogether, and turn back whence he came. Poor Christian ! Two men met him at the top of the hill, Timorous and Mistrust, running fast, the wrong way. Bad company for Christian, and he is in the worst state for meeting them. They tell him that more danger meets them the further they go. They set out for Mount Zion, have lost heart, and are going back again. They bring the dreadful tidings also that there are just a little in front two

lions in the way, by the merest glance of which they were so frightened that they fled, without knowing whether the beasts were sleeping or waking.

Mark how Christian reasons against Timorous and Mistrust—against fear and faithlessness. If I go back, I *shall* perish ; if I go forward the worst is, I *may* perish ; if I reach the end, I am safe. To go back is certain death ; to go forward is only fear of death. I must venture ; I will go forward. This is a Christian's language ; the language of faith,—but not assurance. He does not give way to fear. He parts company with the two unhappy men, who run down the hill, whilst he goes on his way. Then immediately he finds out his loss. No roll in his bosom, where it used to be, where the Comforter placed it. The Spirit itself bears no witness with his spirit. That witness was his roll ; that roll, his pass into the Celestial City. That is, he felt it to be his pass. Not that one must have assurance to admit him to heaven. He must have the Spirit ; but he may have the Spirit and yet not have a very decided sense of his presence. That sense is assurance. Of course, if one has not surety of possessing the Spirit, he must go tremblingly to the gate of heaven. That surety Christian has lost at present ; he has not lost the Spirit itself. The proof is his distress. It is because he has the Spirit that he mourns over the sense of his presence which he has lost. The Spirit is my pass to heaven. We next read in what way Christian recovered his lost sense of safety. By careful retrospection of what he had been and done ; step by step he went back.

THE HILL DIFFICULTY.

The pilgrim scrambles up the Hill ;
 To the hard task he sets his face
 Courageously, and with a will
 Strives more and more to mend his pace.

The Hill is steep, and still more steep ;
 He needs must crawl on hands and knees ;
 And all he can is but to creep
 The swiftest of a snail's degrees !

The good Lord gave, before he started,
 Drink from the spring ; he was refreshed ;
 Now halfway up, worn out, faint-hearted,
 Behold, a bower of perfect rest !

It was so sweet, that he forgot
 One half his task remained to do ;
 He slept ; he lost—but knew it not—
 Love's courage and its comfort too.

He hastened on ; he hastened back ;
 He found the lost Roll on the floor ;
 Shame rent his soul as in the rack ;
 Rejoicing still, he wept the more.

Oh, could we but the joys of God
 Receive in moderation meet !
 Our path should be where Jesus trod ;
 Our confidence should be complete !

XII

THE PALACE BEAUTIFUL

The stately palace called Beautiful is a representation of the visible church. Christian is already a member of the church invisible ; has been so since he entered the strait gate, since he came to a full persuasion that God was in Christ seeking to save him. But hitherto he has stood alone, in fellowship with no company of kindred believers. Now, however, he is represented as in view of the Palace Beautiful, with a desire to enter it, and making all possible speed forward, to rest there. The church is here viewed as an outward organisation amongst men, and before their eyes. In parable, Christ refers to it as a mustard tree of great beauty and size. Speaking of it as an inward power, he uses the leaven as illustrative. The church as a visible organisation, notwithstanding many blemishes, is worthy of the name Beautiful. It is the abode as we see here of Piety, Prudence, and Charity. To see its beauty, try to think of what the world would be like without it, with no Christian congregation in it.

The pilgrim wishes to connect himself visibly with the church. He gets into a very narrow passage ; and there are two lions in the way. For fear of these

Timorous and Mistrust turned and fled. The pilgrim begins to fear that it is impossible for him to enter. He has thoughts of returning, not to sin and Destruction, like these, but from seeking admission to church fellowship, when Watchful, the gatekeeper, speaks a word of good cheer to him, and he proceeds. "A very narrow passage." If one join fellowship with a Christian church, he must limit himself to less of the world than the law allows. It will be expedient for him, considering the circumstances of the world and church respectively, to make some additional sacrifice, to limit, or narrow himself, so that he and his church may have a distinct character before the world. Some think, very erroneously, that the more like the world you make the church appear, the world will be more easily won over. The opposite is true. "Looks very narrowly before him," sees two lions in the way. The church fellowship should not be entered without forethought, and by forethought often difficulties and dangers are seen which have to be braved. It was better that the pilgrim should be prepared for the danger, and not have the lions fly on him unawares.

Sometimes people are kept back from church fellowship by want of heart holiness. They think a sense of that is needed. This a lion often. Some from fear of reproach and ridicule. They expect worldly associates at home or in business to give them annoyances, if they become fixed and active in connection with some Christian church. Some from fear of danger. In Bunyan's time persecution existed, and life was often in danger

by the profession of Christianity openly. This was a lion in his day, now dead and gone. The pilgrim is directed to keep the middle of the way, and nothing shall hurt him. See how scrupulous he is to be—in the middle of a narrow passage in the narrow way. Giving good heed to the porter's directions, he passes on and passes by unhurt. Threats of opposition are made loud enough, but come to nothing. The hindrance and danger are far less than he supposed. The lions are chained; and his Lord holds the chain. He comes up to the gate seeking admission, clapping his hands for joy.

Here we have the examination of Christian before admission to the church. He applies for lodging; the porter asks him whence and whither; his name, and why he comes so late. He tells all frankly—Graceless formerly, in Destruction—set out for Mount Zion. He had come sooner had he not slept, and lost his assurance. This is a sign of grace in him now, when he does not attempt to justify or palliate his error. The porter calls Discretion to aid him in examination of the pilgrim. His own name is Watchful. Watchfulness is needed on the part of the church doorkeeper to allow none to be frightened away from the door; and Discretion is needed to admit no unsuitable person. Discretion does not probe Christian's mind rudely, but gently, as only a woman's hand can do; she enquires into his experience, his motives for coming, his desires, and expectations. The examination of an applicant for admission to the fellowship of the church has to be

made discreetly, with discernment and caution, lest the probing that must be made be carried too far, or made painfully severe. Discretion has tears in her eyes—tender sympathy with the pilgrim ; and, when satisfied herself, brings her three sisters, Prudence, Piety, and Charity, who, after very little discourse, find something responsive in the pilgrim to themselves, and he is admitted into the family. Many others welcome him. It is understood that the pilgrim at this stage has something of the qualities of all these : watchfulness, discretion, prudence, piety, and charity.

The pilgrim is entertained by them ; they give a drink of the water of life, and promise supper by and by. In the meantime they discourse. Piety first. To Piety Christian relates how that fear first led him to pilgrimage. Then the Gospel Word of God led him to the gate. Then to Interpreter's house, where he learned that Christ will not forsake the work of His own hands ; can keep the flame of spiritual life up, in spite of all. Where he saw the pictures of despair and judgment to come ; and the brave man who won the crown ; the Cross, the lost burden ; the righteousness, the character, good conduct, the assurance. These, he says, were the best things. Also he relates his experiences with Simple, Sloth, Presumption, Formalist, and Hypocrisy. The hard work of hill Difficulty, and the terrors of the lions. Piety draws all this from him, a retrospect of the way through which the Lord had led him.

Then Prudence examines or talks with him, for he is not now on trial ; but a member of the family publicly.

The substance of their talk is this : he remembers with shame his former country, regrets that he carried so much of it still with him ; has golden hours of triumph over sin ; the thought of the Cross brings these, or of Christ's righteousness, or of the Spirit in his bosom ; and also when his heart burns after the heavenly country. He loves that country because Christ lives there ; no sin, no death ; happy company and holy occupations. Charity enquires appropriately respecting his family affairs. At mention of his wife and his children Christian weeps. They would not come with him. All means he tried, but in vain. " I seemed to them as one that mocked." Not only would they not go. They wished to dissuade him. He talked to them, prayed for them, pleaded with trembling and tears, but in vain, over and over and over again. His wife was worldly, and his children given exclusively to youthful pleasures. He did not destroy his good words by a vain life either, although he could not commend his life. They found nothing in him except over tenderness in sinning against God, or doing wrong to his neighbour. Christian seemed to be as true in his dealings with his family as he was with himself.

Then comes the sacramental evening meal—the Lord's Supper. The table is well furnished with all that is fitted to give strength and good cheer. The talk is concerning Christ. His sufferings, His death. His resurrection, His love : the victory that crowned all. They have a rich feast of these through penitence and faith. After the sacrament, peace. Eating the flesh and

drinking the blood of the Son of Man, at a common table, is the best possible way of enjoying Divine peace. The pilgrim is represented as resting in a large upper room called Peace, whose window looked to the sun-rising, so that the first beams of the morning sun would shine in on him.

Next day Christian is taken into the study, and sees there some rich and rare things. First regarding the nature of his Lord, and what his Lord had done, and enabled His servants to do in past times. The more we study Divine things, the more we see their beauty and feel their power. Otherwise, we shall never feel constrained, as the student Paul was, to cry, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." The Scriptures are the old records which Christian searches in the study; wherein you do not require to dig deep to get the essentials of saving knowledge; but the more deeply you dig, your work will be the more richly rewarded with treasures of peace bringing truth. In the study Christian comes to see his Saviour more clearly as a God-man, omnipotent to save in Himself; and not less able in His servants, who by faith had endured every kind of hardness, and done valiant deeds beyond all human expectation or parallel. He sees this comforting truth also, that the Lord's mercy is as great as His omnipotence, and finds more of the riches of hope, and peace, and joy. It is the glory of God, as of every true nature, to be searched and known.

From the study he is led into the armoury, where he beholds everything needed to equip a soldier of the

Cross, and all ready to be given for the asking to every one who applies. Moreover, he sees some of God's artillery, which had done noble service to Him in days past. Weak things in themselves ; but mighty through God. A stick, a hammer and nail, pitchers, trumpets, lamps, an ox's goad, a jaw bone, a sling and stone. These were earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God and not of man. Christian is next day for setting out, but is persuaded to stay one day more. He is taken to the watchtower of the house, and shewn the Delectable Mountains in the distance. It is in the line of his pilgrimage ; but far in advance ; a very beautiful country, with woods, vineyards, fruits, flowers, springs, and fountains ; called Immanuel's Land, and open, he is told, to all pilgrims. It can only be seen when the day is clear. It happens to be clear when Christian looks, and he has a good view of the pleasant land in the morning sun. These Delectable Mountains represent attainments of heavenly delight on earth, which the Christian hears of, often before he reaches. Not a view of heaven. Christian has a view of future joys ; he is also prepared for future battles with his foes. He would have gone forward without armour ; but his friends first clad him from head to foot with proof mail, except his back, and gave him his weapon. The whole armour of God is simply Christ ; to put on Christ is to put it all on. Name any part of the armour, it is a name of Christ. It is a sign of progress in Christian too, that he wants company. He enquires if there is any likelihood of a companion

for the way. The porter has seen one pass by named Faithful, a townsman and near neighbour of Christian. Christian is cheered, and giving the porter his benediction, begins to go forward, in hopes of overtaking Faithful.

Christian scarcely knows the dangers and trials before him. He shows perhaps a little too much eagerness to be on, rather than to be ready. He would have rushed on for the Delectable Mountains unarmed ; and so he would have rushed down the other side of the hill, alone, and come to certain grief. But God's mercy was with him ; and Discretion, Piety, Charity, and Prudence go with him, though he has not asked their company, and well it is they go with him ; for the hill is as dangerous to go down as it was difficult to ascend. It is difficult to get our Christian joys ; it is dangerous to have them. A brimming cup is not easily carried. Christian has been on a hill of happiness ; he is now going down into the Valley of Humiliation. God has given him great comforts, and is about to take some of them away. Poor Christian is about to be tried, God fits him for it beforehand.

XIII

THE FIGHT WITH APOLLYON

We have had Christian in Palace Beautiful, that is in church fellowship, and enjoying it very much. He is reputed discreet, pious, charitable, prudent. A discreet man of faith, hope, and charity. He sits at the Lord's table with great joy ; and after some urgency on the part of his friends, puts on the Lord's armour, and sets out on his way. What next ? The Valley of Humiliation. Notice, the pilgrim in his progress does down, not back. Now the Lord will not lead any one down, who is not too high up. Christian is too high up in his own esteem. More inclined to boast of his privileges than to profit by them. There is spiritual pride in him. He must needs be brought low. The valley is near. The tempter too is near. It will be good for Christian to learn how little he has to be proud of, and how weak he is. With difficulty he ascended his mount of privilege ; danger awaits him there. For he rather forgets himself in the very sweetness of his Christian joys. It was noticeable that he was not so anxious to be clad as Goodness was to clothe him with the whole armour ; and that he was not so desirous of getting the company of his good friends Discretion, Piety, Prudence,

Charity, as they were desirous of giving it. He was as yet too self-trustful, and self-satisfied. At length these good friends leave him ; but their gifts he takes on with him ; bread, wine, and raisins. The bread and wine to signify that he could eat the Lord's Supper as often as he felt hungry for it,—his crucified Lord ever with him, to lean on, to live on, to rest in. And the cluster of raisins to signify that if he could not get the new grapes of communion joys, he might still have the old to subsist on—dried fruit indeed, but still sweet and nourishing ; the cherished memory of the richness of former social feasts. Christian is fast coming to lose his pride. Not far on till he meets Apollyon. We call Jesus the Saviour. Apollyon means the destroyer. Christian is fleeing from the City of Destruction ; but here comes Destruction itself to confront him in his path.

Christian's pride is not like that of an unconverted man. In any case, pride and Satan are not far separate. But in Christian's case the adversary is met in the teeth, and a battle takes place. In the unconverted man's case Apollyon finds a willing captive, the two walk arm in arm in the same way. It is because the pilgrim has Christ in his heart of hearts, and something of pride existing outside of that, that a struggle is inevitable, and he must needs be humbled. Mark how Christian behaves when he becomes sensible of the tempter's approach. A moment's fear, and hesitation. Will he go back, or stand his ground ? He remembers that he has no armour for his back, and that settles the question. To go back is certain death ; to stand firm may be

victory, and at worst can only be death. He resolves to stand. He has regard to the honour and service of his Master ; but even though he had nothing in view but the saving of his life, he concludes it would be the better thing to do.

You have here represented a Christian approaching a crisis in his experience. A terrible trial is at hand. A temptation to yield to the devil, almost irresistible, is presented to him. What may it be ? It may be almost anything. What is a temptation to one is not so to another ; a sin that repels one, attracts another. But all have some weak assailable point in their character, and at some time or other the adversary comes with all his might to attack the Christian through that weak point. Notice a proof here of the pilgrim's Christianity. The aspect in which he sees Satan approach. He recognises him at once as a foul fiend. A child of the devil would not view his father so. Fiend means hater. This hater is also foul to Christian's eyes. So that the hater is hated not merely for his hatred, but for his vileness too. As he came nearer Apollyon looked no better to the pilgrim's view. He seemed a monster, neither one thing nor another, part fish, part dragon, part bear, part lion ; no one thing about him in harmony with another ; a hideous discord to the eye ; no harmony in Satan ; no peace therefore in his kingdom ; no society in hell. There is unity in truth ; untruth never can make one whole, and never can be adorned. Satan's power may be here represented also. He can swim, fly, walk, run. Fit for land, air, or water ;

for regions cold or hot. May come on his prey noiselessly like a fish ; fly to it with wings like a dragon ; rush on it like a lion ; hold it like a bear—suffocate with smoke or burn with fire. This represents a nature with prodigious and endlessly varied power of an evil kind at its command. He looks disdainfully on Christian. Had the pilgrim not been Christian, Apollyon would have looked fondly ; but he can shew no liking to one who wears a breastplate of righteousness.

Between the two there is a battle of words, before they come to blows. Apollyon tries by all means to induce Christian to submit to him. First, he claims him as his own. “ You are one of my subjects.” The first statement he makes is a lie. But it is supported very plausibly. “ The country you come from is mine. You have revolted from your rightful king, and were it not that I have hope of service from you, I would end your existence where you stand.” Like all liars, you will notice he is always promising and threatening what he is not able to do. Christian acknowledges that he was born in his service, but when he grew up found it too hard, and the wages (death) did not make it better but worse. I tried, he says, to get a better master, better work, and better wages. The claim is disowned, and the threatening fails. Apollyon next tries flattery. “ Do come back, and I promise to give you the easiest work and highest wages our country can afford.” “ No,” says Christian, “ I am pledged to another king.” He remembers, no doubt, the sacramental oath lately made at the Lord's table. “ But,” says Apollyon,

“ notwithstanding that, if you come back to me you will be doing nothing uncommon—many give Him the slip. Do so too, and all will be well.” “ It would be treachery,” says Christian. “ Treachery !” says Apollyon. “ You have first of all played the traitor to me ! Think of that ! And yet I am quite willing to forgive you, if you turn again.” Christian gets roused at this. “ You pardon me for leaving you ! It is God’s forgiveness I seek, for ever serving you at all. Destroyer, I disown you ; I don’t like your service, wages, servants, government, company, country, I like His ; I am His, and His I will be.”

The adversary keeps calm still, and tells Christian to consider, when his blood cools down, what evils he is sure to meet, if he go on. Telling lie upon lie, and supporting them plausibly. “ Don’t you know how many have come to a shameful death in this way ? Their King (in whom you boast) did not trouble Himself to deliver them from the teeth of saws, and wild beasts, and from devouring fire and sword. But have not I saved my servants from these dreadful evils ? I will deliver you too, if you only trust in my power and cunning.” Christian knows too much of God’s truth to be deceived by this : and when he declares that these light afflictions—which were allowed only for the sake of love—were not to be compared with the weight of glory to be revealed afterwards, Apollyon has nothing to reply, and failing in argument he begins to try defamation ; rakes up Christian’s faults ; accuses Christian of unfaithfulness to his Master. Apollyon has rather the

advantage here ; for Christian's pride is wounded, and he challenges the adversary to shew wherein he has been unfaithful. If that fiend could smile with delight, he did it then. For he has a heap of evidence ready to produce. He shews himself well acquainted with Christian's faults, for he was at the making of them doubtless. He then details them. " You remember the Slough, the trudge to Legality, your sleep, your hesitation at sight of the lions, in short your vainglory in everything you say and do." This was a homethrust of truth by Satanic hands, and for Satanic ends ; but these ends are not gained. Christian's pride is slain, and his self-sufficiency. By pride he gave Apollyon the advantage ; now by humility he regains more than he lost. What is his answer to these accusations ? " All that is true, and much more that you have left out. You call me bad, but not so bad as I really am ; and my Master's mercy is sufficient to forgive and to mend it all."

Apollyon in his turn gets roused, openly declares his enmity, and his intention to prevent Christian getting one step further in his course, blocks up the way, and declares he will spill his soul. The parley is at an end ; and the battle now rages. Fiery darts fly thick as hail at Christian. But for his armour he had been gone in an instant. He is wounded in head, hand, and foot. Bad opinions, work undone, or badly done ; evil company. He slides back a little. Gets weaker and weaker. Satan flies at him with might and main. Seizes a favourable opportunity, grasps Christian, and dashes him to

the ground. Christian's sword is gone too. Not a single word of God he has at command ; the adversary is on the top of him, fetching the last blow to finish poor pilgrim. Could extremity be more extreme than this ? Could God's grace have a finer opportunity of glorifying itself ? At that moment the sword is in Christian's hand again, and in Apollyon's heart ; the dragon wings are spread, and Christian alone remains master of the field. The two-edged sword has done it—the perseverance of saints, the love that makes it possible : two edges. After the battle Christian is healed of his wounds immediately ; observes the sacrament again of the Lord's Supper, renews his oath of allegiance, and goes on his way refreshed, and with sword in hand, ready for any enemy ; but finds none in the rest of the valley. More humble, and therefore stronger than before. We have here a general description of the Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is only a continuation of the valley in which Christian has been walking already.

Christian was uplifted by the greatness of his religious privileges—more inclined to boast of them than to use them. God therefore mercifully brought him low, made him sensible of his weakness, and of the strength of his adversary, and of the all-mightiness of his Saviour. Victory smiled on him suddenly, when at the very lowest, on his back lying, in the Valley of Humiliation. By God's Word he put the tempter to flight. He learned the value and use of his sword, and so we find him going on his way with it drawn in his hand. Formerly, he was proud of his Bible ; now he uses it. He has just

passed through a great struggle ; now a great sorrow awaits him. He may be humble enough, but he has not yet suffered enough. The Valley of Humiliation runs into another, worse than itself ; the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Three features : a valley, Christian is brought low ; a shadow, he is in darkness ; death's shadow, so that death is near in one way or other.

Not death itself this, but the shadow ; a threatening of death, or a sense of its nearness. Usually interpreted merely as a season of spiritual darkness, the essential thing is that the darkness arises from death's nearness. It does not mean darkness as dark as death ; but darkness which is indeed the shadow of death. Not a deadly shadow ; but death's shadow. Rachel's death overshadows her living child ; but if yet a child, it does not see the darkness nor feel the coldness. If, however, it has grown up under the smile of her sunny countenance, as in the summer of Christ's own love, warm and pure and permanent, if Rachel has been kind and loving, with Christ's loving-kindness, through long tried years—what then is her death to her surviving Christian child ? Often for awhile dead Rachel is like a dead Christ. The shadow is often heavier than the substance. Death's shadow worse to bear than death itself. " I could have died better than bear this bereavement." This is one way in which the shadow comes. It may come by a threatening of death on one personally. But usually worst when death comes no nearer but only near enough to take the best beloved away. In that case his Shadow is a dreadful thing to bear. Under

it the soul will often tempt and torment itself with the thought that it has no immortality, and God no existence.

Here Bunyan does not say that the pilgrim lost a friend, or was brought by personal illness to death's door; but we are to understand that in some way death came so near as to cast his dark Shadow over him. It was not so much a time of conflict, as of suffering. His way to the Celestial City led him to and through this valley, under the overshadowing wings of death. It is a very solitary place, he says. A place of miserable loneliness. "A wilderness," uninhabited; "deserts," waste sand; "pits," not only without people and without vegetation, but full of dangerous holes; "drought," no water, pits, not wells, no hope of fertilising the barren soil; "shadow," darkness; "death," silence; a land of loneliness and barrenness; of wells without water, and clouds without rain, of death not actually present, but near enough to let life feel his baneful shadow. A land where the soul is in perfect loneliness, where it can get no meat for its gnawing hunger, and no water for its burning thirst, "a land that no man passed through, if he could help it, and where no man dwelt."

XIV

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

Christian's path lay through the Shadow of Death. He comes up to the border, and there meets two men in great haste returning. Their watchword is Back, Back ! They are fleeing from the Shadow of Death, and advise Christian, if he values life or peace, to do so too. They dislike the shadow, because they fear death itself. Like the spies of old, whose children they are represented to be, they have no liking for the promised land on the other side of Jordan, bring an evil report of it, and wish to keep as far away from it as possible. They tell Christian that the way before him is full of danger, full of frightful apparitions, and appalling sounds of pain and misery, as coming from people bound in affliction and irons. Clouds of confusion, they say, hang over the valley, and what is worse, death is always near with outspread wings. This was a very gloomy view of Christian's course. He hears their story, and is not much discouraged by it. His answer to them is in substance this : From what you say, it may be a sore trial to me to go on, but go on I shall, in spite of all, until you shew me that I am in the wrong way, or am

likely to get anything better by going back. Christian is moved by principle, not personal ease. God's way is through the midst of that Shadow, and through he will go. To go back, he reckons, is certain death ; to go forward, at most, can be no worse ; and if death must come, it is better to meet it in the way of righteousness. Come death, it is better to meet it in the teeth than be overtaken by it in the act of running away. So the two men flee for life towards Destruction ; and Christian, with his sword drawn, goes on his way. He takes a firm grasp of God's Word, it is the sword that lately saved him from the power of the devil—he reckons it the best weapon to do battle with the same or any other enemy. The two men he met on the border of death's shadow are the children of the spies. They are spies themselves. They are all eyes, and no heart ; no faith in anything but what the eye can see. They well represent those who are mere critics, or onlookers in religion. Looking at God's things with a cold calculating eye, deprecating everything that does not please them ; not at all in love with the things they spy out, and satisfying themselves with a superficial glance at the surface, and with reference only to the present. They flee from death and the Shadow as a terrible evil. If the Shadow falls on them, they get out of it on the wrong side, seek relief from the world, rather than seek God. They do not go forward straight in God's path, bravely to encounter what He is pleased they should meet with. But in a cowardly, self-seeking spirit, turn and flee. They hate the thought of death,

and when forced on them, would resort to any unrighteousness almost, or worldliness, to get rid of it. Now God wants us to look at death, to familiarise ourselves with it, that we may know it truly, not superstitiously, and to be able to meet it calmly and hopefully when it comes. When the sorrowful shadow falls on us, in whatever way, let us pass on through it, nor seek relief by any ungodly means, but wait till God give it in the way of His righteousness.

Here we have Christian fairly entered into the Shadow. The blow has struck him ; he has staggered under it. But holds on his Christian course. The sorrow is exceeding great, but he is striving to bear it after a godly manner. He is in great danger of yielding to one temptation or another. He has a deep ditch on one side, and a quagmire on the other ; the path of righteousness between them is exceeding narrow. The ditch is that into which the blind lead the blind—it represents false views of God's character or ways. The quagmire is that into which David once fell—it represents sensuous indulgence. The Christian, under overwhelming sorrow, and in the thick darkness of mystery that overhangs some of God's providential dealings, is tempted either to blame God for harshness, or to seek relief to his trouble impatiently by carnal means, by indifference, or sin. Or, on the one hand, he may indulge presumptuous hopes ; on the other, despairing fears.

None but those who have been in the Shadow can know what this next feature means. It is vain almost

to discourse about it to others. Deep grief leads Christian to the mouth of hell. It is God's way of salvation, however ; it goes past that fearful den. But still is enveloped in the flame, smoke, sparks that issue from the place—Christian can only pray here. God's Word seems useless. It is not useless ; but his mind is so filled with " sparks " of hell that he cannot use it. He can only cry. He puts up his sword into its scabbard. He shuts his Bible, and betakes himself to All-prayer. Those sparks are Satanic thoughts, which come into his mind unbidden. These thoughts are spoken of also as fiends rushing upon him. The Christian is sometimes greatly distressed by blasphemous thoughts. Whilst reading the Bible, they will come into his mind, like hosts of dead flies dropping into the honey, whilst he is supping it. So much so, often, that he will be compelled to close the Book, and try to get relief simply in prayer. The more sensitive, and highest order of Christian minds, are more troubled in this way. Especially when an overwhelming sorrow befalls them. So powerful are the evil thoughts that occupy their unwilling minds, that sometimes they will imagine they are the shape of fiends, and that they hear audible sounds near them. Luther threw his inkhorn at the devil, and the mark is still seen on the wall. Bunyan, too, sometimes felt as if hell were quite open to his senses. It requires a strong mind, for one thing, and intense religious feeling for another thing, to pass through such experiences. Comparatively few have either mental capacity, or depth of piety enough, to be conscious of passing near the mouth

of hell, to come into such a state of intense spiritual conflict as to have the external senses bewildered by Satanic sounds and apparitions. I do not say it is at all desirable to see and hear such ; but sometimes it is unavoidable. They are not symptoms of weakness ; but of power. It is true, the weak have their fancies : it is true also, that some, for very weakness, have no fancies. A strong nature, a powerful spirit, a great soul, when intensely engaged with inward and eternal realities—it is not to be wondered at if the inward life should sometimes project itself into the outer world before the senses in audible or visionary ways.

The pilgrim, when tempted to give up his Christian course, is encouraged to go on by the remembrance of former dangers vanquished. He had always conquered before, why should he give up in despair now ? If he should not succeed, it was better to fail fighting than fleeing. So he resolved to go on. And when something like a crisis came in his spiritual experience, when evil thoughts came like troops of fiends thickly besetting him on every hand, and as close to him as they could be, he courageously cried out, "I will walk in the strength of the Lord God." Immediately the fiends fled, and came no further. But then he began to think he was a fiend himself, from whom he could not escape. Hitherto he had felt that the blasphemies were being thrown in upon his mind, not rising out of it. Now he thinks they are his own ; hell does not need to assault him, for he has it in his own bosom. This is a worse trial than any he has had. Ah ! then it cannot be true

that the blasphemies are his own, for then they would not pain him as they do. So Bunyan represents one of the fiends, more cunning than the rest, stealing softly behind the pilgrim unperceived, and whispering the evil things so slyly, that Christian cannot imagine them emanating from any mind but his own. Notice how grace operates on him in the midst of this trial. Hard thoughts of Christ, bring up loving thoughts too. Tempted to curse his Saviour, it results in making him think more of his Saviour's love, and of his love to his Saviour. "It is dreadful pain to think these thoughts of my Beloved." It is love that makes him feel the pain. Throw hell fire into the Christian's heart, it only makes his affections warmer for Christ and heaven. The darkness is deepest and coldest before sunrise. During the night, and shortly before morning, Christian gets some drops of comfort into his cup of sorrow. Three drops : I. Others have been as much distressed in this way as I am. II. They have testified that God was with them in their trouble. Why not with me ? III. I hope soon to have the company of one such to cheer my solitary way.

In this valley there is perfect loneliness, as well as thick darkness. The distress is such as no stranger can enter into or alleviate. Christian thinks he hears the voice of a man before him ; but he gets no company till he is out of the Valley. Some time before that, however, daybreak comes. The darkness that has been hanging over God's character and ways is beginning to roll away. Truly the light is sweet. And Christian exclaims, "He hath turned the shadow of death into

the morning." Let us see what use he makes of the light when it comes. He takes God's present light, and throws it back upon past darkness. What he knows of God now, he uses to explain what was mysterious before. Light means knowledge, peace, and joy. It begins to dawn on Christian. He begins to feel glad in God again. Glad that God has taken His own way ; and looking back on that way, with new light in his eye, and good cheer in his heart, he sees reason only for profound gratitude to God, for guiding him safely along that narrow path between presumptuous sin and despairing fear. It is only now he sees how dreadful a situation it was to be in. He sees the children of the pit, too (blasphemous thoughts), afar off now, for they hate the light, and do not approach it. Glad in God, the Christian has nothing but good thoughts of Him. It is when the terrible stroke of affliction comes that the hobgoblins and dragons of the pit rise. Beautiful is the expression : " bringeth out to light the shadow of death." Bring the shadow to light, and it disappears. And if the shadow is no more, death itself is dead ; for to the Christian it is no more than shadow.

We find the pilgrim full of gratitude for his deliverance. He is still alone, but in light or gladness. He sees the danger better now ; but he is not so much afraid of it. More light, less fear. And his very path of light is represented as even more dangerous than that of the darkness which he has passed through. The Valley of the Shadow of Death has two parts, one half dark, the other light. There is more fear in the dark half,

more danger in the light half. We are to learn that the Christian is not in greatest danger when in deepest distress. The shadow may not be present, but it is the valley still—death's valley. We are often near death, when there are no signs of it—that is, in danger of spiritual destruction or death when there is no sign of temporal death. Glad in our health and strength and temporal comforts, our spirits are often then in greatest danger by snares and traps, and deep holes, and shelvings down. But the light here evidently means knowledge or illumination, as well as joy. Christian sees the traps, by God's light, but for which, he thinks, he would in this place have lost a thousand souls, had he had so many to lose. In *affliction* he has been taught many lessons, has got more light (experience), which both enables him to see the death traps of Satan and to avoid them. Let us pray for illumination; when we are glad it is most needed then.

Near death and hell is the abode of Pope and Pagan. Both giants: both dwelling in the same cave. Both deadly enemies of pilgrims, and, in former times, the death of very many. Old giants—Pagan dead; Pope, crazy and stiff, with as much ill-will as ever, but without the power he once had. These two giants are akin, if not brothers, cousins. Pagan represents *heathenism* which has died out in this land; Pope represents *Romanism*, which exists still, as in Bunyan's days, in gigantic proportions; but cannot now persecute and kill with fire and sword, as it used to do. They are both giant errors, living not in the way of life, but beside it,

in the same cave of darkness ; the one devoted to worship of idols ; the other not different, only the idols trusted in are living or dead men. Romanism is simply paganism, baptised with a Christian name. They both put creatures in God's place. Both persecutors of the faithful in this country, to which Bunyan refers. Pagan shed much Christian blood in Druidical times, when the true light began to shine upon the heathenism of our forefathers. When Pagan died, Pope began to carry on the bloody work of persecution. Gradually, God's Word was perverted by traditions of men. Faith in Him was supplanted by faith in what were called saints—living or dead. And those were put to death who refused to do and believe what mere human authority dictated. But in Bunyan's time the Reformation had come, and the old man, Popery, had no power to harm pilgrims. He could only sit at his cave's mouth, bite his nails with vexation, and threaten them. Christian sees the old man, and hears his threats ; but he held his peace, went by, and caught no hurt.

We learn here how best to deal with Popery. When it speaks, hold your peace and walk on, in the way of undefiled Christianity. It is needless to argue with the old man. In our day, he is as crazy and stiff as ever, so far as persecution is concerned ; but quite active and alert in seeking the promotion of his bad cause by other means. Much of his success is due to Protestant Reformation Agencies. Our youth are brought to the mouth of the cave, to see the old man abused and mauled, until their eyes begin to water with sympathy

for him. If you want to train up a child for the Roman Catholic Church, the surest and speediest method is to distract it with anti-popery books and lectures. If you wish to preserve it from that and every dangerous error, let it know the truth simply and purely as it is in the Bible, and let it see the same lovingly exemplified in your common life. If the Protestant Church were always and altogether as anxious to live the right, as some parts of it are to refute the wrong in the Roman Catholic Church by windy disputations, it would bear with far more effect against that and every other system of error.

Christian mounts a little rising ground, cast up for the purpose of letting pilgrims see before them. God's promises are rising ground ; when we come to them and use them, they let us see comforts in our lot which were hid from us before. How many opportunities do we let slip, of getting wider and more cheering views of God's past, present, and prospective dealings with us ! Many a little ascent, by God's Word, is in our way, erected for the purpose of letting us see how much more we have to be thankful for, than we yet know of. Often instead of the high way, we choose the low way ; and in consequence are left to low spirits, or low tastes and tendencies, by our own neglect—perhaps to complain that God has forsaken us, when, if we had only taken the trouble to ascend the little hill, to use the means, we should have seen Him quite at hand.

CHRISTIAN OVERTAKES FAITHFUL

Christian sees Faithful near, calls to him to stay. Faithful only casts a look behind, and continues on his way. Christian cries louder, "Stay, stay, till I come up to you!" Faithful, true to his name, refuses to stay, because God forbids him. "I dare not stay, it would be at the risk of my life." Christian is rebuked by the fidelity of the other. He should not have asked the other to delay in his course; but if he wanted his company, he should at once have made up to him. Christian is convicted of idleness. He sees a fellow-Christian more active than he; instead of bidding him God-speed, he bids him stay, selfishly consulting his own ease, not Christ's work and glory. "Don't go to the prayer meeting to-night, or your class in Sunday School," says Christian to Faithful. Why? I want your company at home. "I must go, and if you want my company you must come with me." Christian's pride is wounded. Attempting too hastily to correct one error, he falls into another opposite. He has not been so active as he might; he now becomes more active than he need be. He pushes on, through strife and

vainglory, to get beyond his brother ; which he does, not much to his credit or advantage, however, for losing his balance he gets a smart fall, and is so stunned as to lie helpless till Faithful lifts him up.

The church, the prayer meeting, or Sunday School, is attended from vainglory ; Christian is more punctilious than Faithful ; seems riper, further on, nearer glory ; but his head being so full of vanity, he takes little care about his feet ; a small thing comes in the way to try his temper, or his boasted zeal, or love, or purity, and the smile of vain triumph over brother Faithful has not time to leave his face before he is down, wallowing like a worm in the dust. “ Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” This little adventure on first acquaintance makes the two more loving afterwards. Christian at first, no doubt, thought Faithful harsh and unfriendly. Now by experience in time of need he finds him a friend indeed, and all the more reliable, because unbending in his fidelity to God. They have together sweet discourse of all that has happened to them.

Let us never think to serve a friend, be the entreaty ever so urgent and frequent, by unfaithfulness to God. We may be uncharitably judged, and disliked, for not accommodating ourselves to the wants or wishes of some, when the service of God forbids it, or leads us to another course ; but certainly, in the long run, those most displeased will find reason to thank God that we took His course, not theirs. Christian companionship

is next to heaven, the sweetest thing possible. A true Christian friend is like another Christ—you can enter into the home of one another's spirit, and sup mutually of one another's joys and sorrows. The subjects on which you talk are in themselves so grand and comprehensive, so practically momentous, and having the same spirit, you have kindred hearts of love for them, and kindred eyes wherewith to look upon them. There is oneness between you, and yet diversity, so that the oneness is not monotonous or tiresome, and the differences, like the varying notes in music, result in the wholeness of sweet harmony. Only a tried friend can properly be reckoned a true friend ; and it is in trouble that friendship is tried. Christian found Faithful his helper and friend, when in shame and disgrace he was lying low in the dust. Now walking together, they open up their minds freely to one another. From the conversation we learn that Christian was the means of setting Faithful on pilgrimage. Faithful is his son in the faith. Christian's conversion made a great noise in the city. It was in everybody's mouth. It struck many hearts with fear. It roused many careless. But the impression made soon died away in most cases. They were too idle, or busy, or fond of pleasure, to cherish and bring to practical and saving results the religious impressions they received.

Not so Faithful. He set out, after his spiritual father, and passed him on the way. To be Christian is good ; to be Faithful is better. Christian, it is possible, may be surnamed Littlefaith ; but Faithful is full of

faith, and therefore, though starting last, is soon found first. This is the victory that overcometh—even our faith. Christian enquires how it stands with Pliable, on whom he exerted a good influence for a while. It seems to stand very ill with the poor man. He is said to be seven times worse than if he had never gone one step on the way to Zion. For pleasure he set out ; for pleasure he turned back ; and seems after all to be worse off for it than ever. It was reported in the city that he fell into the Slough of Despond. He denied it. Pliable only speaks the truth when it is pleasant to do so. He was ashamed to confess that he was ever troubled on account of his sins. He would rather add to his sins by lying than acknowledge that he was ever sorry for them. He is despised by all classes, even those who disapproved of the way which he forsook. Those who would have urged him to return now hiss at him for doing so, and call him turncoat ! He could not look in the face of Faithful, slunk across the street, out of his way. Pliable, or anything you please, if it please him. The opposite of Faithful. As unstable as water. Firm only in this, that he seeks to please himself. Christian had hopes of him at first—the symptoms were good. The green blade rose up rapidly from the soil ; alas ! it turned out there was no deepness of earth. The thin soil soon shewed what was in it. The sun rose, the trial came, and the green shoot withered up. Every self-seeker is Pliable. Faithful is Obstinate baptised into Christ.

Christian and Faithful are now walking pleasantly together, and talking about their bypast experiences in

the way. They have both come in the same way ; but have not met the same things therein. They are different men ; the same in Christian principle, in loyalty to Christ, but have different natural tastes and tendencies. So that what is a trial or temptation to the one is not so to the other. Faithful escaped the Slough of Despond. Did not fall in. Passed over by the steps. This we should have expected, if he was worthy of his name. His characteristic is faith, a readiness to believe in God's Word. We are not to think he had not such deep convictions of sin as Christian ; we are to suppose he had ; but under these convictions he still held on by God's promises of redemption to sinners who come to Him. He saw that God was willing to pardon sin, and to eradicate it. He saw how much God had done for sinners, and he had no doubt that God would, in His own good time and way, give him the deliverance He had given to so many others. So that Faithful did not despond, when in conviction. It was this despondency—or hopelessness of being pardoned, that Christian felt—a state of mind in which he both saw his sinfulness and believed he would sink and die in it.

Faithful got over the Slough without difficulty, but meets danger where Christian met none. Wanton, a person of no good name, lurks near the way of life, and assails him with her fair face and flattering tongue. She did not think it worth while to speak to Christian, who stood in relationships different from this poor solitary youth. We are not told whether she meets Faithful outside or within the strait gate. It is in the

neighbourhood of it, however. He is near Christ, and yet not far from danger. Wanton, whose steps take hold on hell, is at hand, promising all manner of content, except that of a good conscience. She is a very beautiful young woman, gaily dressed, fair in speech as in looks, a laughing eye that invites Faithful to speak to her, and coaxes him to turn aside with her, before he is near enough to be coaxed with her flattering tongue. Turn aside, he must, for she can do him no harm. He is safe as long as he keeps in the straight and narrow way. His tempter has a fair appearance, but a bad heart, and a bad name—Wanton, that is lawlessness. She has no fear of God before her eyes, disregards his laws, and has no other work on hand, than to bring others to the same godlessness as herself. Though fair as a woman can be, she is as cruel as a wild beast, the depth of her deceit and selfishness is bottomless like the pit itself. “Her steps take hold on hell.” Faithful escapes, how? By closing his eyes, and calling God’s Word to mind. He would not look, even, in her direction; and if he spoke to her he used God’s Word only. Then she came out in her true character, when she saw she had no chance of having him in her power. She railed on him, as he went on his way. Now that you see that disposition in her, how pitiable his case would have been had he yielded to her entreaties!

This Wanton represents the degradation of our bodies to purposes for which their Maker never intended them to be used. Beautiful is everything God has made; and there is nothing more beautiful than the

human frame. Beautiful in itself, let it not be unlovely in the use we make of it. Some, by natural temperament, or by some particular outward circumstances, are more tempted than others to abuse themselves. Nor are they the worst characters that have the hardest struggle. Wanton tempts Faithful near the strait gate. This should lead us both to be wary in our holiest moments, and to be charitable too in judging the fallen. The silly youth is drawn away by the hope of pleasure, to get as little as the fly gets in the spider's web. Had we no conscience we might do as we pleased ; but since God tells us what to do with our bodies and souls, the only possible way of happiness is to obey Him. Our bodies are made to be temples and instruments of the Holy Ghost ; woe to us, if given up in any way to unclean idols !

Faithful meets with a similar temptation at the foot of the Hill Difficulty. Satan always chooses the most favourable time and place for assaulting us. When we see huge difficulties rising before us, in our Christian way, and we are inclined, if possible, to escape it, he is sure to present ease to us, and a plausible argument for taking it at his hands. " I will give you rest," says Christ. So says the devil, too. A very aged man meets Faithful at the foot of the hill, and offers him easy work and high wages. The work is indulgence in many delights ; the wage, promise of the whole of the old man's possessions, to be his heir at last. The old man's name is Adam the first—his dwelling is in Deceit. He flatters Faithful, calls him an honest fellow, which

Faithful seems inclined to believe, and to return the compliment. For he enters on negotiations with old Adam, with a view, if possible, to business. Asks his name, work, wages, house, servants, children. What is the meaning of all this ? Faithful has it revolving in his mind, whether it may not be better to let his natural instincts have free indulgence, to let nature take its course, unchecked by any law, but that which seems to secure his own personal and present pleasure. The old man urges him to this, and promises him everything that natural heart can crave. He has three daughters, and Faithful is welcome to them all, if he has a mind to it. The Lust of the flesh, every bodily gratification ; Lust of the eyes, riches and honour ; Pride of life, the vainglorious gratification of being admired for his wealth and honours. Live with me, he says, and I promise you all these as long as I live myself. Faithful is almost entering on a contract with the old deceiver, when he notices a bad mark on old Adam's wrinkled forehead ; and immediately the thought occurs to him that if he went to his house, he would be kept there, or sold as a slave. " Put off the old man with his deeds." Often when just about to yield to temptation, a word or thought of God, darts like lightning across the mind ; and we shrink back with disgust and dread. Faithful is brought to a sense of his danger, and pushes on past old Adam, but not without some experience of the ill-nature that was in him. He grasped Faithful with so deadly a grip, that he almost pulled part of his flesh away. To part with worldly or carnal pleasures is often

like the plucking out the right eye, or cutting off the right hand or foot. However, this pain of parting with the old Adam was nothing compared with what was just awaiting him. It was painful to leave off tampering with sin ; it was far more painful to meet God's law.

XVI

CHRISTIAN AND FAITHFUL MEET TALKATIVE

Faithful begins to ascend the hill ; halfway up, a man comes, swift as the wind, and three times lays him in the dust. " When the law came, sin revived, and I died." Faithful feels himself almost dead, cries for mercy ; the Crucified One appears, and the other stays his hand. The law came by Moses ; but grace and truth by Jesus Christ. Moses can shew no mercy, till Christ interferes. The law cannot spare, till the ransom is paid. Though a season of pain, it is one of great revival to Faithful. More light comes in, and he sees his folly and sin, as he did not before. He did not consent to old Adam ; but had only a secret inclining towards him. At the time he thought that not much to be sorry for ; but when God's pure light came, the sight of that sin almost killed him. Faithful was a better and bolder Christian for this experience. Notice, he passes the Palace Beautiful about noon, and the lions are asleep. The place was built for rest ; but only for those who needed it by the way. He passed by, because he had so much of the day before him. The lions did not disturb him. Those lions represent the fear or

shame that often prevents believers from making an open profession of their faith. Having been so recently and deeply exercised for his secret leaning to the world and sense, Faithful was now in no way influenced by fear or reproach of man. The lions were asleep. And he did not feel it necessary to profess Christ in the usual way.

Faithful, in the Valley of Humiliation, meets Discontent and Shame returning. The one did not get the honour he wanted, and the other got more ignominy than he cared for. The Valley of Humiliation is the place to try one's faith ; Christian was tried by Apollyon there ; Faithful, by Discontent and Shame. Discontent said—You only make a fool of yourself by practising Christian humility in the eyes of Pride, Arrogancy, Self-conceit, Worldly-glory. “ Yes,” says Faithful, “ but I had rather be out of favour with such as these, my blood relations though they be. I am weak and unworthy, truly, and feel no discontent at want of the world's honours or enjoyments. You pity me for denying myself things which if I had or trusted in them would make me truly despicable.” Discontent complains against religion that it does not give enough enjoyment. Shame complains that it does not make one stand well enough in the opinion of the world. At any rate, that religion which has truth in it, and therefore humility. Discontent mainly complains of the valley ; Shame of religion itself. Wanton, Old Adam, Discontent, Shame, all try Faithful, try his faith. He gives countenance to none.

It was only a leaning towards declension for which he suffered. Sunshine he had in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Faith sees the invisible. We are then told in what place and way Christian and Faithful met in with Talkative. It was in a roomy place, where they could all walk together ; where professed Christians of various denominations or dispositions have intercourse with one another. They have common meetings in one another's houses, or in public places. The place where Talkative came in view had room enough for them all to walk. It was Faithful who first noticed him. Happening to cast his eye on one side, he saw a man at a distance, a tall man, and the further away he looked the better. Though walking in the same direction, Talkative was not in the same track with them. He was on one side, and at a distance. That was the distance between a true and false professor. People who attend the same church and prayer meetings, brothers and sisters who kneel at the same domestic altar, take part in the same religious exercises of Scripture reading and Psalm singing, are walking in a roomy place, and going the same way apparently ; and yet one may be Talkative and another Faithful ; walking in different paths nevertheless, and at a distance from one another ; as great a distance, too, as there is between truth and falsehood. Talkative is a tall man. This refers to his prominence as a religious person. As such he is a marked man. He talks prodigiously on religious matters ; and people take his talk for a great deal more than it is worth. High in

repute amongst those who know him no deeper than the tongue. Better looking at a distance than at hand. His figure is prepossessing a long way off ; but the man himself, when you pass beyond appearances to reality, becomes less likeable the more you know him. It is Faithful who first sees him, and who enters on intercourse with him. This is what you expect of Faithful. One who has a simple trust in God will generally be found ready to trust men too. Faith is childlike ; it is unsuspecting ; takes a man at his word ; readily gives a man credit for the good profession he makes. This is what we find Faithful doing here. He sees a man at a distance, tall, easily seen, and without doubt that he is as good in himself as he is good looking, Faithful joins company and converses with him.

In the following conversation you will notice that Talkative, true to his name, has much more to say than his neighbour. The two men are greatly pleased with each other. Faithful makes his religious profession ; Talkative does the same. Faithful wishes to discourse on religion ; Talkative is delighted, laments that he can find only a few so disposed, declares that speech cannot be better employed than with God, and the things of God. He is very fluent in his talk, and it seems all to be seasoned with the salt of grace. He speaks highly of the Scriptures, where the Divine things recorded are so wonderful, he says, and so sweetly penned. Almost in one breath he glibly recounts the essential doctrines of Scripture ; he seems so much in

love with them, and so desirous to be profited by converse about them.

Vanity of earthly things—benefit of heavenly—new birth—self-righteousness, Christ's righteousness—repentance, faith, prayer, Gospel promises and consolations—how to refute false opinions—vindicate the truth—teach the ignorant—all these are learned, he says, by talk. "But," says Faithful, "surely mere human effort or mere talk will not secure them for a man; are they not the gift of God?" "Yes, truly," replies Talkative, "and that I know very well—of grace, not of works;" and he offers to quote a hundred Scriptures on the point. Then when Faithful asks what one thing they shall talk of particularly, Talkative declares that he is ready to speak on any subject. It seems that all are alike to him. The truth is, he has real interest in none—his interest lies purely in the talking, and not in the thing talked of. But Faithful, in his simplicity, is amazed at his companion's extraordinary power. He believes in Talkative as a man of uncommon godliness, and highly gifted with utterance. And wishing Christian to lose nothing of the benefit he expects from Talkative, he steps aside to him, and declares that they have got a brave companion, and a very excellent pilgrim. Faithful has the charity that thinketh no evil. Indeed, he has had no occasion for thinking anything but good of Talkative as yet. Taking the man simply at his word, and as he presents himself, there is something hopeful and promising about him. It is good to talk on religious matters, talk fluently and fully. Out of the abundance

of the heart the mouth speaketh ; and when the heart burns with love, the mouth grows eloquent, and will not cease. God listens with delight, when His people talk warmly about His character, works, and ways. Too often God's people are sinfully diffident in expressing to one another their hearts and minds. Here Faithful finds a man who seems to be of the true stamp—possessing knowledge, able to express it well, and heartily willing to do so.

But Faithful does not yet know that he is listening only to the sounding brass. The talk that so much pleases him is empty breath, and hollow sound. It is well for him that he does not give up Christian altogether, who, so far as talk and appearances go, is quite under eclipse by this new light shining in Faithful's eyes. The truth will out sooner or later, and here it comes to Faithful's ears. The real man Talkative, who has been at a distance and very good-looking, is brought nigh, and looks very much worse than he did. Christian is a little amused—although he acknowledges it is no joke—with the deception so successfully practised on Faithful. He knows Talkative, and frankly declares what he knows. It is a mock charity—not Christian charity—that covers up untruth, or calls it by a better name. Charity is very tender in regard to a brother's offences ; ready to forgive them, but is very stern and terrible in its denunciations against offences that try to conceal themselves, or pass under false names. Christ was love incarnate, but never did human lips speak more severely than His against such phases of character

as we have here in Talkative. We are to regard this testimony of Christian, as that of Truth itself—it is as if Christ Himself, looking at Talkative, looking him through and through, were declaring what He saw to a simple-minded believer, who was ready to be deceived.

Christian tells Faithful that the man's name is Talkative, a man so cunning that not one in twenty will ever suspect it in him. "I know him better than he knows himself," says Christian. Let us mark that. The deceiver is always himself his greatest dupe. Other eyes and minds see and know far more than he. Talkative, it appears, is a worthless fellow, notwithstanding his fine tongue. Like a painting which, by its colours a long way off, seems to represent something well; but coming near, you find it only patches of paint, without likeness of anything in heaven or on earth. Talkative is for any company, or any talk. As pleased with the thoughtless, gay, and vain, as with Faithful. Religion has no place in his heart, house, or conduct. He will talk religion in the tavern as readily as anywhere else, and talk the better the more drink you give him; or if you will, he will give up religion for politics, or any other subject under the sun. A devil at home, harsh, churlish, tyrannical, unreasonable—no family worship, no religious training of his children, his poor wife heart-broken—the slightest indication of religious feeling in any of them shamed out of sight by his villainy. In business those who know him place no dependence on him, unfair, treacherous. Good men who know him are ashamed of him. A blemish on the name of religion,

to all who know him. But to many saints abroad he appears saintly. Few know that he is a whited sepulchre. Like one of the unclean beasts—his mouth right, his feet wrong ; his words good, his ways bad.

This is something like the character Christ, or Christian, represents Talkative to have. Faithful is at first amazed that one so fair in speech should be so bad in deed, and in truth. " I grow sick of his company," he says, " what shall we do to be rid of him ?" " Speak of his personal acquaintance with religious truth," says Christian, " and he will soon be sick of your company too." This is what Faithful proceeds to do, and the man of mere mouth in religion is soon silent, and leaves Faithful in displeasure and disgust. Let us examine our own, in the light thrown on Talkative's character. One may not say much on religious matters, and yet be in the same class with him. All are Talkative's children where the mouth—however little it say—says more than the heart feels or teaches. The head may be full of religious knowledge, the tongue may be able to converse intelligently regarding it, there may be a great deal of interest felt, too, in that kind of talk, and there may be no blemish on the life or reputation, so far as human eye can see, and yet it is only Talkative with a better coat on his back. The same man, under more restraint outwardly, but as little under the constraint of the Divine Spirit inwardly.

Talkative begins briskly to discourse to Faithful on the marks of the power of grace on the heart. Although he has had no experience, he can talk on experimental

religion. But the faithful dealing of his companion soon brings him to a halt. He is cross-questioned very closely, and begins to complain that the conversation is becoming disagreeably personal. He sees no difference between talking against sin and hating it ; and thinks that if one have knowledge, it is experience of the truth. "No," says Faithful, "the mere talker seeks knowledge to supply his tongue merely ; but the true believer seeks it for practice in his life." "You are personal in your remarks again," says Talkative, feeling his conscience touched. And he would rather stop talking, but Faithful goes on to tell him what he thinks the true marks of grace in the heart ; conviction of sin, shame on account of it, a closing with Christ, and strong desire after him. This is evidence to oneself. Evidence is given to others by an experimental confession of faith in Christ ; and an answerable or consistent life. Then Faithful probes Talkative with the question—"Do you feel this in your heart, and shew this in your life ?"

In the most solemn way this searching question is put, calling both God and man to witness. Talkative is put to the blush, and begins to make excuses for not answering the question. "Why do you ask me ?" he says. "Because I wanted to know if your heart agreed with your tongue. Now I see you dare not say it does. I have heard of you ; and I tell you the plain truth." And so Faithful goes on to hold up the mirror of Truth before Talkative. He gets angry, as all insincere people do, at their own portrait ; throws the blame on his friend Faithful, and leaves him. Experience first—be

sincere and you get it ; then you have something to talk about. Prize every person or thing that throws light on your sin. Do not flee from or blame the light. Talk often one to another. Some are not talkative, but have as little heart-religion as he.

XVII

VANITY FAIR

We had Talkative in company of the two pilgrims, Christian and Faithful. They fall in with him by the way, or rather beside the way. He was not exactly in the same track as Christian and Faithful, although he seemed and professed to be walking towards the same destination. He did not stay long with them, for the same reason that owls and bats do not stay long out of their holes when the sun rises. Christian, who knew the man, held somewhat aloof, and allowed Faithful to deal with him. The best thing possible. If you bate your breath, or mince your words, in dealing with an insincere person, it will only increase your confusion, and make him no better. Deal faithfully with him, let God's truth have free course, and at once the insincerity will be seen, to the advantage of all parties. Faithful puts to Talkative a searching question or two on experimental religion, and the man, having no experience at all in religion, answers evasively for a little, and then in a rage parts company with his friend. He avoids the light, and seeks concealment rather than correction to his unconverted state. Truth and untruth cannot long walk together, undiscovered to each other.

Thus it is that some drop off from church fellowship in connection with this or that congregation. Some word is spoken or thing done to test the reality of their Christianity. Instead of humbly, patiently, courageously answering to the truth that comes to them, they are offended ; and often their departure is mourned as a loss, when truly it is gain. Let us hear the conversation of Christian and Faithful over the departure of Talkative.

Note here the value of Christian fellowship—the weary wilderness is made glad by it, so that the pilgrims scarcely know it to be a wilderness at all. “ The wilderness and solitary place shall be made glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

Here you have the picture of a Christian congregation. Reduced in numbers, but all the better for it. The disruption has only added to its strength and comfort. The lonely and rough way is made easy by pure communion. If you build part of your church wall with wood, hay, and stubble, it will come down some day, the sooner the better. You increase the bulk, and lessen the strength of the building. Let Talkative and his children join in Christian fellowship with you, and they are sure in the public to give their character to your Christianity. They only do harm in that position, puzzle the world, blemish Christianity, and grieve the sincere. If the world is to have anything set before it in the name of Christ, let it be something that has at least found Christ, and is actuated in some measure by His Spirit.

Next we have the pilgrims in fellowship with one who has been God's minister to them. They meet Evangelist, from whom they have both derived much help. He has more than once been God's mouth to them, and they are not more glad to see him than he is to see them, making progress in the way of life and coming victoriously through many trials. He gives them one or two brief exhortations. Here you have the minister and his people rejoicing together, and happy in the thought that in due time their joy shall be full. It is very encouraging when a minister finds that his work has not been in vain altogether—the human instrument is apt to think it is merely beating the air; what is the use of continuing the work, there is no impression made. There is often too much secrecy on the part of hearers who have really something to say, but don't like to speak, and so their poor minister goes down to his grave, heartbroken because he hears no echo from the hearts of his people to the truth he preaches.

God sends this minister with a word in season to the pilgrims. He warns them of the tribulations which they may expect to come soon. Forewarned is forearmed. Alas! many people get no warning because they foolishly keep themselves out of the way of it, by neglect of prayer, or Scripture reading, or church attendance, they pass on unprepared for the fiery trial, and are lost in it. Evangelist tells them that they are not yet out of gunshot of the devil, and will soon have to pass through a town where the shots of

that enemy will fly thick as hail around them. The blood of one at least will be shed, but he who dies first will have the crown first, so be of good cheer, good pilgrims, and when you are in the trial, remember what I said, stand true to God, and He will stand true to you.

Then comes Vanity Fair, through which the pilgrims must pass ; and they are soon in the heart of it. The place is first of all described. This Vanity Fair is evidently intended to represent the world's allurements, which are met in so many forms by Christians who are engaged in the bustling activities of life. Every Christian has to mix in society. Hitherto we have had the pilgrim's Christian life, as spent in retirement, now they come out of the wilderness, and are in the whirl of every day business life. Let us see how the common business world is here described. Vanity—emptiness—which well describes the character of most of the world's business. Early rising, sitting late, toil, sweat, worry, hurry, envying, grieving, over-reaching, panting, shuffling, groaning, etc. How much in most cases may we suppose it amounts to ? Vanity. A Fair, the world's fair, its harbour of delight, the gathering up, the congregation of all its good things, for show ; and it amounts only to a show of nothings, when viewed in the light of spiritual and eternal realities—a brilliant display of nothings : the sum total of its wealth, set down only in ciphers. This is true. Set down a long row of ciphers without a unit in it, and it represents the value of a street in Vanity Fair ; another row,

another street, etc. The streets have different names, but they have not really different things, for all is vanity.

The Fair is as old almost as the beginning of the world. Contrived by Satan as a trap for souls on the way to heaven. The Deceiver, apparently, when succeeding most, most deceived. He burns Faithful there, and sends him by a short road to his desired haven. All sorts of merchandise, amusements, crimes. Every country, too, has its own lot of these vanities, for such they are, and in that respect, though named differently, are all alike. Jesus did not pray for His people to be taken out of this Fair, but to be kept from the evil of it. He wished His servants to lift up a testimony in the very heart of the enemy's camp. Here Himself also was tempted in all points as His followers are, and is able therefore both to sympathise and help them to the uttermost.

Vanity Fair represents everything this world offers to make us happy. Its business occupations, its riches and pleasures. In these things there is only a show of substance. They are all in truth vanity, or emptiness. The drunkard thinks he is slaking his thirst when he drinks out of his fire cup. He is only increasing his thirst, adding fuel to the flame already burning. His hope is vanity. Not vacuity however, but vexation of spirit. So is everything the world offers to give us peace; even its lawful business and pleasures, if Christ be not in them, are vanity. My meat and drink are vanity, if I do not realise Christ there. They may

indeed support me for many years ; but what then ? There is no eternal life in them—no peace to my soul. Vanity Fair is the whole compound system of earth's business, riches, pleasures, apart from Christ. We are told Christ did not lay out one farthing on anything in this Fair. His meat and drink was to do His Father's will. Here we have two followers of Christ entering on the Fair, let us see how they behave, and what befalls them. At once they were noticed as a peculiar sort of people. It is no good sign, when side by side with unbelievers, as we must be in this world, there is no perceptible difference between them and us.

Christian and Faithful make a great stir in the Fair. Notice, not by any effort on their part to create it. It was not their object to draw public attention, or make a noise in the streets. They were quietly pursuing their way heavenward. They therefore represent Christians who are living out quietly and consistently their religious profession. The stir was occasioned by their singular appearance, their dress was different from that of others—by their strange speech, they did not speak as others commonly did ; by their foreign tastes, they did not seem to value things by the ordinary standard. No sooner did they enter the Fair than their peculiarities were palpably felt in these three things : their dress, their talk, and their tastes.

I. Their dress was extraordinary. Perhaps Bunyan refers by this to the righteousness in which a Christian trusts. Although this is not a thing that readily catches the public eye, it may soon come to be known however.

It does seem a strange and foolish thing to the worldly to trust for salvation to anything but what we do ourselves. To protect ourselves by faith in Christ's righteousness, seems a needless and foolish thing. Do good, and you need nothing else for acceptance with God, says the world, which judges of one only by the outward appearance. Justification by faith may be regarded as the Christian's dress.

But where this faith exists in the heart it works changes on a person's manners and conduct. He puts on Christ: that is, his deportment and doings are Christ-like and unworldly. This can easily be seen. A Christian thoroughly consistent in his business ways will make a strong contrast to others. If an article is bad, he will not on business principles call it good, or give it a misleading name. This honesty is superfine, nonsensical, unworkable, downright folly, says the ordinary merchant. You must do as others do in the same trade. There is a recognised trade morality, which comes and goes to suit your own interests; and it is sheer stupidity to ignore it in your business transactions. There is one dress for Vanity Fair, the faithful Christian wears another, very different. The rule by which he cuts his cloth is this: not what will pay me, but what will please God. A funny dress, old-fashioned, inconvenient, strait-lacing one, so that it suits none but fools and madmen, says your acute, accomplished man of business. Poor Christian and Faithful are objects of derision at the point of the outstretched finger. One's Christian dress includes not only Christ-like conduct,

but also a Christ-like way of ordering it. A Christian will be courteous to all, to the servants of his servants, as well as to his equals. The world says that you must not be kind or condescending in your manner to such and such persons, or you are a fool. Very well ; better be a fool than a wise man in Vanity Fair.

II. Besides their dress, their speech was strange. The Fair people did not well understand what they said. It was not a language they were used to, and they did not like it. There was no sense in it. How apt are we to imagine that what we cannot understand is foolish! So these Vanity Fairites regard the Christian talk of the two pilgrims. In society there is little relish of religious conversation, because there is little apprehension of it. Those who do apprehend it, like it infinitely better than any other talk. But the worldly cannot bear it. Speak of love to Jesus—they don't know it. Speak of conviction of sin, of penitence, faith, hope—it is a foreign tongue, they don't know it. "Sweet and blessed Jesus," let that expression come from your lips, and they think you crazy, and talking gibberish. It is reality to you, but romance, or mere inanity to them. Speak of heaven, they would rather not. Speak of God's love, you might as well speak of colours to the blind, or of music to the deaf. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him.

III. Besides in dress and speech, the pilgrims contrasted strongly with the Fair people in their tastes, or the way in which they estimated the things around them. They had no heart for anything the Fair offered,

and would scarce look on anything for sale there. In their reckoning, all put together was not worth the outlay of a farthing. The truth was this, their hearts were occupied already with things of an unseen and eternal city. They had no love to spare for anything else, and though you had offered the whole of this town's treasures to them for nothing, they would have reckoned it a bad bargain. This was most incomprehensible to the merchants of the town, and they did not know how to be spiteful enough against people who could be so foolish. If you are spiritual, your carnal neighbours will stand confounded when you prefer spiritual to carnal joys. They cannot understand how anything can be more agreeable than the common amusements of gay society. If spiritual joys are felt at all, they are usually felt absorbingly. The pleasure of light reading is easily given up, the pleasure of Scripture reading so far transcends it. "Tell me of heaven, tell me of Christ, tell me of the love of God, tell me of His mercy and His grace and truth—tell me where I may find my Saviour and my home, spoken of in the most clear and comforting way; and when I may say or do anything to commend them, for my heart is so bound up in these things I find pleasure in nothing else." This is the Christian's heart cry; whilst another is only concerned about food or clothing, wondering how to spend the time till next social pleasure comes round; and when one amusement becomes tiresome, and another, and another, with an unsatisfied heart asking, what next? what next?

The scorn, derision, rage of the crowd increase, as the pilgrims press on their way, and become better known. They declare they will buy nothing but the truth, which seems to the Fair people to be a very wicked resolution, and so great a commotion is made that the chief magistrate of the place is sent for, who comes quickly, and with some others examines the pilgrims, finds them to have been the cause of the uproar, and leaves them to be beaten, besmeared with dirt, and caged for the amusement of the crowd. Such experiences have actually happened to many Christians since Christ. But if the violence has ceased, the spirit that was in it still exists. And not seldom the unreasonable and wicked opposition of Vanity Fair to the Truth is found in connection with the professed Church of Christ.

XVIII

MARTYRDOM OF FAITHFUL

Christian and Faithful, by their unworldly dress, speech, and tastes, create a stir in the world. They are *in* it, but not *of* it. In Vanity Fair there never was so great a disturbance, as when these two men entered it. The people of that town had often quarrelled with one another ; but never was such rage known till the two pilgrims presented themselves. It was like a spark of fire dropping into the midst of a mass of dry fuel. When the wind comes and blows on it, it glows fiercely. Christ says He came to send *fire* on earth, and a sword. So He did. He knew what was in man ; more than that, He brought it all out. His very presence in this earth, the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, brought out what was in man better than it had ever been brought out before ; brought it out to exposure, to trial, to judgment, to condemnation. Brought it out, not by force, but naturally of its own free accord. Till He came, man never had opportunity of shewing how wicked he was. Was it wonderful that Christ should bring fire and a sword on earth ? He was so pure, and true, and good, that He provoked the evil to come out of its hiding-place. Never were crowds so

full of rage and cruelty as those that persecuted Jesus. Not that men were more wicked then, in themselves, but their wickedness was more stirred up, and poured forth. The fire had been burning since the Fall, but never did it blaze up to its utmost fury till Christ came. The sword had been drawn before, but, comparatively speaking, it had scarce begun its direful work till then.

Now Christ dwells in Christians, if they are worthy of the name, and the effect of their presence in the world is similar to that of His. Christian and Faithful come into Vanity Fair. They are the most peaceable persons there ; but the effect of their presence is such an outburst of rage and riot as the Fair has never known. Are they the cause ? No, only the occasion. Untruth is always at war with itself ; but its fiercest war is not with itself but with the truth. Take an unconverted family. Whatever profession of religion, or no religion, they may make, their hearts, minds, words, and ways are full of vanity. They live in the world's fair. But do you think they are always at peace ? No ; they can no more make harmony than discordant notes can. The discord is sometimes bad enough, and much worse than neighbours have any idea of. But yet it is nothing at all compared with the strife that rises when one of the family begins a life animated by the sweet spirit of Jesus. The smouldering heat becomes red hot, the smoke a blaze. Christ has come, and the little peace there was has fled. Christian and Faithful have entered the Fair, and there can be no more business done with comfort, the pleasure-seekers are confounded. The

strength of all the little strifes amongst the worldly is combined into one great torrent of bitter feeling against the poor, innocent, unworldly pilgrims.

They are detained and put into a cage. Very sad, no doubt, for the pilgrims to be thus detained, and exposed for show, as if they were wild beasts. They would have gone through and out of the Fair, as soon as possible. Yes : we would sometimes like to leave this vain world, for our own good, but, for God's work and glory, like these pilgrims, we are detained a little. Had they gone quietly through the town and away, it would have been a great loss to their Master, and to the town itself. They put them in a cage, the best place possible for their witness-bearing. By the hands of those wicked men, God's candle was taken from under the bushel and set forth on the candlestick. The townspeople intended to make them a public show ; so did God. He made the wrath of man to praise Him. Everybody flocked round to see and hear. The more intelligent asked what the matter was, and why these men were beaten and abused. They saw Christian and Faithful bear all the abuse so meekly and patiently, that they began to take their part ; and indeed the more they enquired into the case of the pilgrims, they found less to find fault with. Some were gained over. This enraged the crowd more, and led to worse treatment of the prisoners—they were hauled about in irons, and beaten pitifully. What a noise and talk over the matter there must have been in the Fair ! Such noise as Christianity, so often and so much abused, has made in the world.

God sometimes cages His servants very uncomfortably, much against the servant's natural tastes and inclinations, when He wants a great work done by him. The pilgrims are repeatedly brought before the magistrates, and charged with causing the whole uproar. They are thrown back into the cage, their feet fastened in the stocks, and are told to prepare for death. They call to mind what Evangelist told them, and if one must die, each reckons that if it be himself he will have the best of it. At length on a day appointed, the great trial takes place. My Lord Hate-Good is on the bench. The world's best choice of a lawgiver and administrator of justice. Hate-Good—Hate-God. The carnal mind is enmity against God. The jurymen are twelve; the world has its twelve apostles too. They are led appropriately by one Blind-man. There is No-Good amongst them—if there was no ill-will perhaps they might pass; but we find there is Malice, Love-lust, Live-loose, Heady, High-mind, Enmity, Liar, Cruelty, Hate-light, Implacable. These are the men to whom the world entrusts the administration of justice and judgment. Not wonderful that David should prefer to fall into the hands of God rather than of man. The world has none better to judge than these in spiritual concerns. The indictment against the prisoners is, that they are spoiling trade, causing dissension in the town, and despising the prince.

As you would expect, Faithful is the man to reply to these charges. "We set ourselves," he says, "against nothing in your trade that God approves. We are men that make peace, and are not disturbers of it. And as

for your prince, because he is the enemy of our Lord, we defy him, and all his angels. Three witnesses come forward against the prisoners: Envy, Superstition, Pickthank. These represent the main barriers to the acceptance and progress of pure Christianity. Envy or ill-will, a feeling of uneasiness at the good which another seems to be enjoying. Superstition or bigotry, a religion of prejudices, rather than principles, articles held without any intelligible reason. Pickthank, a name given to one who will do anything to gain favour. Ill-will, prejudice, selfishness. Happy are they who find no other witnesses than these to testify against them! The first complains that the prisoner, Faithful, is unfriendly to the town's customs; the second, he is a foe to its religion; the third, he is no friend of its nobility. There is some truth in what these witnesses say; but no truth in the conclusion they draw therefrom, that Faithful is a vile pestilent fellow. And so Faithful in reply declares that he is ready to recant, if they can shew him his error. "I condemn nothing in your customs but what the Word of God condemns; nothing in your religion except what God has not revealed; as for your nobility, I make bold to say they are every one of them sprung from the pit, and should never have been anywhere else!"

Then the judge addresses the jury, and lays down for their guidance the law by which Pharoah drew his murderous sword, Nebuchadnezzar kindled his fiery furnace, and Darius opened his den of lions. The jury retire, and soon return with an unanimous verdict of guilty; then the sentence is passed, and summarily

executed. Faithful suffers every possible indignity and torture, and is at last burned to ashes at the stake. No, not the man, but his fleshly mantle.

Vanity Fair represents the everyday common life of this world, apart from Christ. A holiday that began early in the world's history still goes on, and is likely to continue for a good while to come. The main object of men in it is to get pleasure, or to get gain. The question with them is—How shall we enjoy ourselves, or how shall we enrich ourselves? These questions are quite legitimate and good in themselves. God wishes us to be rich and happy evermore. But He would not mock us with anything but the true riches and the true happiness. The world offers what God offers. Its Fair is set up in opposition to the Kingdom of God. It has a stone, and calls it bread; it has a serpent, and calls it a fish; it has a scorpion, and calls it an egg. It offers pleasure and gain, what men are seeking, what God intends men to seek; but it can no more give these than Winter can yield the fruits of Summer. You cannot make ropes of sand, or of sunbeams. No more can you get gain, or get pleasure, from the world. Seek for fire in the waters of the lake—you may, but will you find it? An insane person thinks he sees fire there, but it is only the reflection of the sun, or moon. You get the reality of riches and pleasures from above; only the shadow from below. The world's fair is vanity, or emptiness. After a fair trial, you find that there is nothing else in what it offers—no gain, but emptiness of gain; no pleasure, but emptiness of pleasure. But alas! there

is fulness of something else—vexation of spirit, such as Judas felt, when he flung down the pieces of silver, and went and hanged himself; such as the rich man felt when, instead of the pleasure his fancied gain was to yield, he suddenly found hell fire in it.

But what is meant by the world, which is so empty of solid good, and so full of solid evil? It is simply this: a life spent without love to Christ as its motive, and without Christ's glory as its aim. That is Vanity Fair. And there is not a single thing mentioned in Bunyan in connection with the Fair, that you will not find in a life so spent, however respectable, and even Christian it may seem to be. Indeed, the best Christian among us carries too much of the Fair along with him, and he need scarcely look for its vanities with the outward eye at all. But if even a Christian's heart is a small—no, not small, but world-wide—vanity fair, there is a Christian and Faithful in the midst, perhaps very sadly abused, but still living and nobly testifying to the truth. We do not need to look out of ourselves for the world's fair. We have been used to think that in order to get a glimpse of it we must leave our comfortable homes on a Saturday evening about eleven o'clock, and take a walk down the Canongate or Cowgate, and witness the drunken brawls going on, the buying and selling, the gain-hunting and pleasure-seeking, the howling and shouting, tearing, swearing, foaming of demonised humanity. No, not at all. You need not put yourself in the way of the bad smells, and the fearfulness of these inhuman sights and sounds, to get

a view of the Fair. Just sit where you are, close your eye, and look in. Is there no vanity in you ? Is there nothing but Christ ? No faith, hope, delight in anything but what is solid truth ? Love to Christ, the one motive ; His glory, the single aim ? If not, then you need go no further for the Fair and its celebrities. The tragedy of burning Faithful is enacted seriously enough, and often enough in the secret of your own heart. The trial, and the hubbub, the persecution, and execution, are events of ordinary, daily occurrence within you. You cage Christian and Faithful, as often as you restrain the Divine Spirit in you. You burn Faithful as often as you are untrue to the truth.

Did you not shudder when the names of Vanity Fair's nobility were mentioned ? The judge's name ; and the jurymen's ? You wondered where in all the earth a man like my Lord Hate-Good, the Lord Chief Justice, could be found. I can tell you. Go to your own street and door, enter your room alone—he is there, if Christ is not. You will see his face if you look into your mirror. If Christ is not supreme in you, Hate-Good (Hate-God) is. The natural heart is enmity against God. And these jurymen with the ugly names, where are they to be found, out of betting rooms, and racecourses, and dancing saloons, and brothels ? As near my Lord Hate-Good as possible. They are your bosom friends. Mr Blind-Man has a dark room all to himself in your understanding. Mr. Nogood has the freedom of the whole house. You have entertained Mr. Malice as often as you have been ill-disposed towards

the truth, or one of its children. Mr Love-lust looks ill by that name, but you have found him very pleasant company in your evil imagination. Live-loose, you don't know him ; you have always been regular in your conduct ; you are not a profligate ; oh dear no ! but a loose thought, or desire, is in Christ's way of reckoning as bad as a loose action. You have not lived loosely before men ; but the secret life of your thoughts and feelings has been far from regular before God. If you are not honest enough to acknowledge acquaintance with him, Mr. Live-loose is all the prouder, and thinks you more worthy of his good graces than ever. The next juryman is Mr. Heady, or Headstrong, who openly or secretly takes his own way in spite of best advice, and knocks his head against the wall. The features of the mule are not more strongly marked in him than doubtless they are in you. It is long since Mr. High-mind (or pride) took up lodgings in you. Do you not think yourself more deserving than you are ? Mr. Enmity is not formally in favour with anybody, and yet scarce any one, Christian or unbeliever, but gives him a good dinner every day. He is a very stout gentleman, and occupies every inch of space which the love of God does not fill. Mr. Liar is chief manager of human businesses in general, a very clever salesman and cunning manufacturer of most articles that are bought and sold ; you meet him at church and market ; at home and abroad ; and talk with him when you commune with your own heart ; but I need not describe further one whom you know as well as I do. When I mention Mr.

Cruelty, I suppose you think of him in the Fiji Islands, eating cold or hot missionary as often as he can catch that game ; or in the heart of Africa, despatching numerous attendants in great haste, to wait on a deceased king. Nay, not in Africa's heart, but your own. Have you not caused needless pain to father, or mother, or friend, or neighbour ? To make the heart bleed is worse than to wreck the human body with a bludgeon ; and if in any way, thoughtlessly or perversely, you have made a tender heart suffer, it was to your own breast, and not heathendom, you had to look for the habitation of horrid cruelty. Mr. Hate-light you recognise at once as the one who has often helped you to sin against the light, when it suited your convenience to do so. And lastly, Mr. Implacable, who will not be at peace with either God or man ; holds you in brotherly embrace only if you are not at peace with God. God comes with reconciliation ; but no, you will not be reconciled in your heart and conscience. How long has God held out the flag of peace, and you have disregarded it ; and cherished an unforgiving heart towards your fellow-men ? Judge and jurymen, the whole pack, you find living, and thriving too, in your own breast, if Christ is not there. These three witness also, against the truth, Envy, Superstition, and Pickthank. How often from envy, or ill-feeling, have you misjudged the faithful words or deeds of a Christian ! Again, when something did not square exactly with your religious prejudices ; again, have you not condemned anyone on the ground simply that you would be praised yourself thereby ?

XIX

CHRISTIAN AND HOPEFUL OVERTAKE BY-ENDS.

You are not to think that Vanity Fair is a professedly irreligious place, without a church or Sunday School. It abounds in churches. It has its St. Paul's, and St. Peter's, and Holy Trinity's, and St. Mary's, of all denominations. It is fashionable to go to church, and profess Christ. My Lord Hate-Good is an elder in a church, and has his coat of arms on the front of the gallery, under his family pew. Nobody would dare impugn his character as a man, or as a Christian. God only knows that that man does not love Him. And when the man dies, "The Carnal Eye," the most religious newspaper in the place, will laud him, as it did his father before him, as an ornament to religion, a pillar in the House of God, and one whose loss the church may well mourn, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. And on the Sabbath after the funeral Dr. Crawley will weep and howl over the departed saint, in a sermon of an hour's length. Now Lord Hate-Good was a good enough judge in everything but the things of the Spirit of God. He condemned Faithful for the very things which were most approved by Him that judgeth righteously. You

will scarcely believe it when I tell you that nearly all the jurymen are also members, if not office-bearers, in some Christian Church or other. Mr. Blindman has been twenty years a Sunday School teacher ; and will talk as long as you like about the clear and refreshing views of Divine truth which he has enjoyed. Mr. Cruelty preaches occasionally in the Methodist meeting, and has been telling the poor to be warmed and fed for nearly fifty years ; and has scarcely ever given them a crust, or an old coat himself, though a very wealthy man. I give these as a sample, and to shew that Vanity Fair is, in profession at least, a religious place, and it was in name of religion that Faithful was burnt there. Why did this happen ? Simply because his was a true profession, and theirs was false.

If you wish to awaken public sympathy in behalf of a bad man, make him suffer. A cry of distress from one who is suffering justly will yet move the hearts of the people towards him. Much more, if the man is a good man, and suffering wrongfully, will his distress attract public notice, and draw forth public sympathy. When, therefore, we see Faithful beaten and burnt to death in Vanity Fair, we expect great fruit from it. There will be eyes filled with sympathetic tears at the mere sight of his sufferings, and hearts melted too when they think of the truth for which he suffers. It was thus the thief on the cross was converted. " We receive the due reward of our deeds, but this man hath done nothing amiss !" We find also that by means of Faithful's sufferings many were brought to the truth in Vanity

Fair. One of these becomes Christian's companion all the rest of the way. Christian has lost one friend and found another, and I think better. God always leads His children on to better things. We are warranted to expect that the future has better things for us than the present has, or the past has had. God took Faithful, and gave Hopeful to Christian. Now, although Christian had every reason to be satisfied with Faithful, yet Hopeful was better for him. Hope is better than Faith, as the Fruit is better than the root. Faithful may be represented by the daylight; Hopeful only by the sunshine. Truly the light is sweet; but if it be sunlight, the sweet is doubly sweetened. Faith, Hope, Charity, in the order of their preciousness. Faith, sweet; Hope, sweeter; Charity, sweetest.

I have often called your attention to God's kind and reasonable interposition in behalf of the pilgrim. Notice it here again. If a man needs help at any time, it is when death bereaves him of a faithful friend. Nothing else will keep him from sinking down. No doubt poor Christian was ready to fall into despair, when Faithful left him, and took the nearest way to the Celestial Gate. Perhaps lonely Christian did not much care to have his prison doors opened, and to see the light of day again. And, when set free, and on his way through the streets, wondered when and where friend Death was to deliver him from intolerable despair. But help came in another shape than death, before he left the city. Hope came when it was needed most. Another pilgrim with that cheering name, not only

with hope, but full of hope, joined him, and they two at once entered into a brotherly covenant which lasted unbroken till their death.

Going on a little, they overtook one with whom it was not so easy to enter into the covenant of Christian brotherhood. There was no hindrance on their part, but on his. And that hindrance, in part at least, was the secrecy in which he kept part of his life or character. He would not tell them his name. He was ashamed to let it be known. Mark, not ashamed of it, or he would have renounced it ; but whilst secretly holding it, and cherishing it, he had a great fear lest it should be known to belong to him. When his name is spoken of here, it means his inner character, or his real life. Now, how could there be any Christian covenant entered into with him ? He was in disguise. Like Ananias and Sapphira, who kept back part of the money, he dishonestly kept back part of that which his fellow-pilgrims were entitled to receive from him. They were thoroughly sincere and open, as transparent as the clearest light. He had the main part of himself shut up in darkness for the very purpose lest it should be seen by them. He was not genuine, and, like all such people, in great fear lest the truth should be discovered, and he should not be thought so. Miserable By-ends ; for that was his name ; he knew it, but would not own it. Do you wonder that Christian and Hopeful found difficulty in entering into communion with this man ? What fellowship hath light with darkness ?

With some people you meet you are in spiritual communion at once. They have nothing to conceal—nor you. Both frank, open, transparent—light meets light ; that is, no craftiness on either side ; no by-ends to serve in what is said and done. The pure (or sincere) in heart see God, and are blessed ; by the same means we see one another and are blessed too. Christian and Hopeful no sooner meet than in spirit they mingle and become one. But there are other people with whom, do as you may, you cannot get into unity and sympathy of the spirit. As you advance with all openness, they retire, and close some inner secret door against you. They will not tell you their name. They are afraid you will discover it. They are not speaking and acting with perfect openness towards you. A thick cloud hangs needlessly over some part of their life or character, making it secret when it need not be, unless some selfish end is cunningly sought after. In your dealings with some, the conviction is forced upon you that the reason they give for anything they say or do is not the true reason. You don't get that ; but it is expected you should believe you get it. However, in spite of all your charity can do, you feel that there is duplicity or double-mindedness in the person you are dealing with, there is a by-end to be served which is kept in the dark, and will not be acknowledged. And the motive or design acknowledged is mere pretence. It is an awful thought that if Charity believeth all things, craftiness is one of them, of whose existence in many persons, Charity is compelled unwillingly, with grief and vexation, to

believe. Now this is the reason why many fail to get good from their religious privileges. They would be converted at once, if they would only consent to be sincere ; to live out what they are in ; or if ashamed of shewing what is in, to get it removed out of God's sight, who seeth in secret, as earnestly as they strive to keep it from man's. How happy By-ends would have been in the company of Christian and Hopeful if, instead of being at the trouble (vain) of concealing his name, he had simply renounced it.

" I want to do a good work," says a young lady in a lecture room, as she suddenly leaves her mother, and goes out of her way to pick up an article that has fallen. Very good, kind creature ! But the end she serves is not the one she mentions ; it is a by-end, an end laid by in some dark, secret corner of her mind. She wants to catch the eye of a person whose recognition will please her vanity. A very small affair, you think. But a straw shews how the wind blows. She wants her mother to believe that her motive is to do good. It is to please herself. She refuses to tell her mother that her name is By-ends. Now, notice, the same insincerity lies at the heart of that young woman's life everywhere. When she goes home, and her pious father reads the Bible, she gets no good for thinking of herself, although she may be quite reverential in her demeanour. She cannot pray with him, for thinking of herself. When he, in his loving-kindness, tries to win her to Christ, she is thinking of something else. In the house of God, too, Sabbath after Sabbath, she is

pursuing by-ends—ends beside or apart from those which she is professing to seek—by-ends which she would not on any account acknowledge ; and if charged with the same would give your word an emphatic denial. The Gospel influences that bless others, therefore, don't bless her. They cannot penetrate her sham life, and change her heart. She does not wish to *be* good, but to *seem* good. She is not pure in heart, and in that state shall never see God.

By-ends is a man that makes a show of affection for Christ, when he wants money or any other temporal good. A person will make himself very pleasing to you, when he comes to borrow from you. He has no love for you ; but he makes pretence of it, until his end is served. That is By-ends. If you have the thing he wants, he will use you as a tool to get it. That is how By-ends uses Christ, and all Christ's things. He comes from the town of Fair-speech. "Is there any good there?" asks Christian. "I hope so," says By-ends. The people of Fair-speech have this peculiarity, that they wear their best on their tongues. It is beautiful to hear them talk. Their speech is fair, and there is nothing else about them that can at all compete with it. Of every inhabitant it may be said truly, that his tongue is the best of him.

It is a wealthy place, for an oily tongue usually gains a good trade. Fair-speech is sure to have a fair purse also. By-ends is related to almost the whole town. Some of his particular friends may be noticed. My Lord Turn-about, who wheels round as soon as he

meets anything disagreeable, or difficult, in religion. My Lord Time-server, who sets his watch with the town clock every day, no matter how far wrong it may be. My Lord Fair-speech, who will give you ten reasons for a good work which he never means to do himself. Mr. Smooth-man, who never uses a harsh word. He would see you hanged first. Mr. Facing-both-ways, who agrees thoroughly with what you say; and then when you tell him that he had misunderstood you, for you mean the opposite, says—"O yes, it is the opposite exactly I agree with." Mr. Anything, who is everybody's friend, so far as Fair-speech goes, and makes everybody's cause his own, in so far as he can get any good from it. Mr. Two-tongues, the parish minister, last-named but not least of By-ends' relatives, uses one of his tongues in the pulpit, and the other to eat his dinner with at his friend's table.

These are some of By-ends' relatives, and form part of the influential populace of his native town. He has been a successful man himself. It shews that in this world a man may get on well, though the end he seeks openly should only be a sham to hide another not so good. His great-grandfather was only a waterman looking one way and rowing another—apparently seeking one thing, and in reality seeking another. By this trade, too, By-ends has made his fortune. He has a wife, who greatly pleases him, my Lady Feigning's daughter. She takes after her mother, who takes after the stage, and is never seen in her true character. The daughter is so exceedingly well bred that she can please

everybody, though in truth she likes nobody except herself. She is indeed a suitable ornament to her husband, and a helpmeet worthy of him.

Christian learns in addition from By-ends that their religion differs from the stricter sort only in two small points. They don't burden it with hard work, and they dress it well, and walk with it when the sun shines, for the approbation of the people. According to By-ends, it matters little whether you accommodate your religion to your own case or not ; and you might as well get a good name and profit by it as otherwise. If some serve religion, good and well ; if some make religion serve them, they have more sagacity, and why should they not ?

BY-ENDS AND HIS FRIENDS

By his talk with By-ends, Christian is made suspicious of something wrong in the man who is unwilling to reveal his name. Turning to his friend Hopeful, Christian says, "It runs in my mind, this is one By-ends, as very a knave as exists." "Ask him," says Hopeful, which Christian does, and gets a denial, as you would expect. You cannot get sweet water from a bitter well, nor truth from a false heart. "It is a nickname which my enemies give me," he declares. By-ends complains that he is ill-used when Truth handles him. It is too bad to expose him, that is where the grievance lies. He is quite willing that the untruth in him should remain ; but not willing that it should be known. See how his hypocrisy comes out. He says that it is because he is a good man and has had good luck, that he has got a bad name ; and, like other Christian martyrs, he is ready to count the reproach a blessing. If you tell a false nature its character, it will cast the blame on you. When Christ reproved the world of sin, it crucified Him as a malefactor.

By-ends puts the blame on Christian. "It's all in your imagination," he says, "and if you will think bad

of me, I cannot help it." And so he puts a good face on his hypocrisy, and looks like a calumniated angel. Christian deals not the less faithfully for this, and assures By-ends that if they go together, he must be prepared to let his religion do hard work, and go in rags, and even in irons. But By-ends will not desert his old principles, which he has found harmless and profitable, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." And when By-ends does not speak hypocritically he speaks conceitedly, saying—"If you don't want my company I will give it to others who will be glad of it."

So it happened that Christian and Hopeful left the man to himself, or rather to a company of three gentlemen who speedily came up with him. By-ends is never scarce of company. He has numberless admirers. Christian has only one companion. By-ends has three. Their names are what you would expect. Mr. Hold-the-world, so grasping that a continent or a hemisphere would not satisfy him. Mr. Money-love, and Mr. Save-all, brought up in the same school with By-ends under Gripe-man, in Love-gain, Coveting. These four are all very friendly; they reckon themselves religious, and all bound for heaven. Money-love asks regarding Christian and Hopeful, who are yet in sight, and is told that they are a couple of bigots that will not let a man keep company with them, be he ever so godly, unless he agrees with them in all things. Mr. Save-all thinks they must be righteous overmuch, and asks what

distinctive principles they hold. "Oh!" says By-ends, "they journey all weathers; I wait for wind and tide: they hazard all for God at a clap; I deal prudently with my life and estate: they don't mind opposition; I do: they would take religion anyway, in rags and dishonour; I think religion has no right to ask favour of us unless it has a respectable appearance, and is pleasant and profitable." This statement of Christian doctrine is highly approved by Mr. Hold-the-world, who recommends the wisdom of the serpent, and thinks it reasonable that if God gives us the good things of this life, we should keep hold of them for His sake. And adduces Scripture proofs; Solomon and Abraham grew rich in religion; and Job says a good man shall lay up gold as dust.

Finding themselves so much agreed, they enter upon a religious conference, wherein the question is discussed whether a man may not be doing what is right and honest if he become more zealous in religion with the view of bettering his worldly circumstances, or his reputation. Mr. Money-love enters very fully into the matter, and shews four excellent reasons why a minister, for example, in a small benefice, should become more zealous if thereby he may get a fatter one:—I. It is good to get more wealth. II. It is good to become more religious. III. It is good also to accommodate one's principles to the temper of his hearers, for it shews self-denial on his part, and a winning disposition, and so more fitness for the ministerial function. IV. It is good to improve one's parts, and industry,

and opportunities of benefitting others. Or suppose it is a tradesman with small means: Mr. Money-love goes on to say—"Is it not quite right for him, if he can, by becoming more religious, to get a rich wife, or better customers to his shop. He is getting good of them that are good, by becoming good himself."

This way of reasoning is highly approved by By-ends & Co., and, thinking it beyond contradiction, call after Christian and Hopeful to stop that they may put the matter before them, and challenge them to say anything in opposition. Mr. Hold-the-world, being cooler than the rest, is chosen to put the question to Christian—"Now answer me if you can." "Even a babe in religion may answer ten thousand such," says Christian, "for if unlawful to follow Christ for loaves, or for bare subsistence, how much more to follow Him for the sake of getting the riches and pleasures of the world?" Notice the blinding influence of worldliness. By-ends and his company could not see the weakness of their argument, and thought it unanswerable. There was rottenness there which they hesitated not to rest their all upon. Christian and Hopeful saw at a glance the error. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." To the upright light doth rise. "If you hold that opinion," says Christian, "you rank yourselves with heathens, hypocrites, devils, and witches. Heathens, who don't know any better. Hypocrites, who know the truth quite well, but serve in secret only their own interests, in so far as they serve it. Devils, who are

professionally its enemies. And witches, who are professional trickmakers."

Christian gives Scripture illustrations. Hamor and Shechem thought by joining the Jewish Church they would make a gain of the Israelites' possessions. The Pharisees, who practised religion with great success, and when poor widows entrusted their houses to them, they kept them for themselves. Judas, who in name of religion advocated the cause of the poor, not for their sake, however, but his bag's sake, from which thievishly and devilishly he was ever on the watch to help himself. Simon Magus, a baptised member of the church, who thought he might venture a little money for the purchase of the Holy Ghost, that he might, as he hoped, get a good return by the practice of miracles. A man who will take up religion for the world, will throw away religion for the world. "To answer the question as you have done," says Christian to his opponents, "is therefore heathenish, hypocritical, and devilish; and your reward will be according to your works." This was plain speaking. The result was that By-ends and his party were completely silenced—they stared one upon another, and staggered behind, that Christian and Hopeful might outgo them.

Light came, but they fled from it; and loved the darkness rather. If Christian's company or word was dreadful to them, they might fall back to escape it; but how could they escape the presence and judgment of God?. There is a day coming when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and nothing is hid that shall

not be made known. How much better to take the cover off our sin willingly, that it may be cured, than have it taken off forcibly when it is too late to hope for anything better. If every sinner convinced of sin would only go a step farther and frankly acknowledge it before God, there would be none unsaved ; for every sinner has convictions at one time or other ; but generally they are smothered, because it is not pleasant to have them. One's responsibility does not lie so much in being a sinner, as in denying it ; or when convinced of sin, in refusing to acknowledge it. Had By-ends and his party simply confessed what they felt, that they were in the wrong, instead of sneaking behind in silence, they would have been fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. Christian and Hopeful going forward come to a plain called Ease, which we are told was but narrow. They were well pleased in it, but it was soon passed over. This means they had a season of relief from all contention and trial. God was pleased to give them what they wished. Their comforts were increased, and all things were going on smoothly and well with them. This experience was brief. The Christian in this world is scarcely out of one trouble till he is in another. This is not our rest ; but our racecourse, and our battleground. At the end of the plain stood a little hill called Lucre. When a man's business is thriving in an easy way, lo ! a great temptation rises like a hill before him ; the prospect of becoming rich opens before him ; he is on Lucre Hill ; there is a silver mine in it, much talked of ; the like not often seen ; a few steps aside from the path

will bring him there ; might he not turn aside to see it ? He might, but not without danger. Many have gone, merely to look at the rarity, and the deceitful ground slipping under them have sunk in the pit to rise no more ; or returned with such wounds and bruises on them as left a mark to their dying day.

While Christian and Hopeful were enjoying their religion easily, the temptation to get rich at the expense of it comes in their way. While crossing this hill Lucre, they see a genteel-looking man, a little off the road, Demas by name, fond of this world, and fond of the work of bringing others to set their hearts on it too. Demas is at his post, and shouts to the pilgrims to come and see. Of course he would not have them think of giving up their pilgrimage. All he asks at first is that they should simply take a glance at the silver mine. If you want your heart engaged with any vanity keep your eye on it. Next he tempts them with the hope of easily acquiring treasure for themselves, if only they will turn aside a little, and for a little. Hopeful is almost persuaded : “ Let us go see.” Christian stands firm, and holds him back. Perhaps his very hopefulness was a snare to the other. He hoped to go and return safely. No Christian virtue can be depended on unless it is exercised in a legitimate way. We are saved by hope ; if it has its eye fixed on treasure in heaven. Hopeful thought they might have both heavenly and earthly treasures, or at anyrate it would do no harm *to look* at the earth's riches as they passed. Vain hope ! The Christian element came in, and said—“ No ! it is

most dangerous to turn aside the least even for a glance at them."

Are there not professing Christians who have no other reason for much of the company they keep, but that there they get a sight of Demas' silver mine? "Is it not dangerous?" asks Christian of Demas. "Not very," he replies, "except to the careless;" and the blush on his cheek tells that he is conscious of lying. "I'm sure By-ends will go," says Hopeful. "Yes; for his principles lead him there; yours don't." On Demas making another effort to gain them, Christian openly denounces him as a condemned criminal, and an enemy of all good pilgrims. "No; wait a little, and I will go with you." Since he could not get them over to himself, he offers to come over to them. The world is sometimes very willing to join the Christian church, and the church is sometimes willing enough to take it for the riches and respectability it possesses. Demas is gentlemanly company. But Christian deals faithfully with him, calls him by his right name, which he does not conceal; and evidently means to stick by his name, or character. After exposing his pedigree, and the trick he meant to play on them, the pilgrims go on their way, and leave Demas and the silver mines of Lucre Hill behind them.

XXI

BY THE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE

Demas has no reason to complain of want of patronage. He has lost two and gained four : By-ends & Co. At the first beck they are his, and are nevermore seen anywhere in the Christian course. The pilgrims observe that Demas has got them ; and laying the warning to heart proceed on their way ; only to meet something else still more impressive. At the end of the plain, they see at the roadside an old monument, shaped somewhat like a woman, at which they look on for a while wondering. Hopeful saw a writing on it ; but could not read it. Christian, with a little difficulty, makes it out : “ Remember Lot’s wife.”

If the old warning was scarcely readable in Bunyan’s time, what must it be now in these days of intense coveting and striving for wealth. Most people pass by any old monument without the trouble to ask what it means. Not so Christian and Hopeful. They look, and read, and study. It works penitence in Hopeful ; and gives them both a subject of profitable discourse. They thank God for their escape. The danger lies not in riches, but in the inordinate desire for them. Many

an image of Lot's wife is living among us. Persons turned to unprofitable salt by the lust of this world's goods. It kills the root of good works in them, and makes them spread barrenness also around them. They occupy space in the Christian church ; but do nothing to enrich it. The writing on the pillar of salt is in " an unusual hand." The expression is peculiar, and Bunyan, doubtless, had good reason for using it. Hopeful, being no scholar, could not read it ; Christian—being learned—after a little difficulty makes it out.

Some of God's lessons for us are written in an " unusual hand." It is not every one that can read them. To some they are mysteries until translated or interpreted by others. This makes us feel our dependence on one another. The Scriptures, for instance, were written in languages that most existing believers cannot understand. It is needful that some should have scholarship or learning to translate or open up these Scriptures. Sometimes you hear Christians, with more zeal than knowledge, speak disparagingly of human learning, as if they had nothing to do but open their English Bibles to find God's Word. They do not recollect that God's Word was given in Hebrew and in Greek ; and but for scholarly men we should not have one word of it in English ; and but for such men, too, we should sometimes be led astray, by our English version, from what God's Word really is. We have reason to be grateful for our English Bible as it is : it reflects wondrously the simplicity of the original. It makes plain the way of salvation to every one who is

anxious to find it. But this all-important fact only makes scholarship the more imperative. Every reader of the Bible is dependant, more or less, on the researches and expositions of men of learning who know the original tongues, and have made God's Word their special study. God works through human instrumentality, makes one class do a kind of work which another requires to be done, but cannot do, and so brings men together in sympathy and Christian unity, by working in them a feeling of mutual dependence, each on the other. One bodily sense is a mystery to another. God's word of duty to each is written in "an unusual hand." The eye for seeing; the ear for hearing; the tongue for speaking; and so on. All have not been made for the same work; and the welfare of the whole body depends on each member applying itself to do its own business. A disciple of Christ is sometimes too apt to blame another for not working in the same way as himself; or for not conforming to the same type with him of Christian character. Some excellent Christians avoid religious meetings; others revel in them. The Lord's work has as many phases as there are individuals doing it.

A good man coming down to breakfast one morning hears strange voices in his dining-room. He stands at the door a moment and listens. He finds a fierce argument going on between the chairs at the table and the clock on the mantelpiece. "You might be of some use," says the old armchair, hitching itself from one point to another before the fire, "if you would come

down like the rest of us, and move about the table or the fire : you stick up there, and never do a thing for master." " He's too idle for that," cries half a dozen of the most active chair fraternity, with wheels on them. " Catch him ; he's too proud." cries another set of master's humble servants. " He's of no use ; master never sits on him," says a crazy superannuate on half-pay in the corner. " I was not made for that," replies the poor, sensitive clock. " I have as good a right as any of you to sit at the table, but it's not my place. I do my master's work here, as well as any of you do it there." But this answer only made them louder in their repeated accusations against their fellow-servant, for pride, idleness, infidelity, and general worthlessness ; and the poor clock was almost ready to let its hands fall down in vexation and despair, when a voice of authority from above the mantelpiece came forth and commanded silence. It issued from an old portrait of the Apostle Paul that hung there. The picture opened its mouth and spake, and after silence was restored asked the clock what time it was. The clock told the time exactly. " Well done, good friend," replied the picture, " these chairs have feet and legs to move for their master, and you have none ; but you have brains in your head, which they have not, and I am sure if you keep your head and hands at work to such good purpose as at present, master will never blame you because you don't move about the room, or let him sit upon you at his fireside or table." At that moment the master entered the room, and the talking ceased ;

but as he gave a glance of approval at the clock, which he found keeping good time with his watch, the chairs felt it as a rebuke to them, and were forced to think that there must be some good service done after all by their neighbour up the way, although none had sense or brains enough to see it.

Some of Christ's servants are, as it were, on wheels, made for easy locomotion ; some have voices in their throats, some have tongues in their heads, and some have brains there. It is for these latter to decipher what God has written in "an unusual hand," in His book of revelation, or the book of His mysterious Providence. To those who are able and disposed deeply to study these books, many things are plain, which to others are dark and undiscovered. Have you not found that in an able or learned man's hand, Lot's wife, or other text or monument of God, has been brought vividly before your understanding, and left your heart with never dying impressions of a saving character ? Or if God had been dealing with you in some strange way in Providence, teaching you by lessons in "an unusual hand" which you could not read, have you not sometimes found that a person who had passed through like trials, and had been able to think powerfully upon them, who could in some measure therefore *read* them, was of great service to you, God's light bringer and Comforter. It was thus Christian, the scholar, read off God's Word to Hopeful the unlettered, at the pillar of salt, which was all that remained of Lot's wife.

It is sad when God can make no other use of man or woman than hold them up to their own disgrace and as a warning to others. "The righteous man's memorial," be it ours to leave behind us ! The difference between Lot's wife and Hopeful. She only looked—he had a desire to look. This is Hopeful's representation of it ; and it is like that of a humbly penitent Christian. But her look came from a worldly heart ; his desire to look came from a Christian heart, which for the time being had let its eye wander from heaven to earth. Only for a moment ; Hopeful sees his sin, and at once repents of it. The unconverted heart, on the other hand, tries to conceal and smother its convictions of sin.

The pilgrims reflect on Demas and Co., and wondered that with that monument so near, they should continue not only to look on this world's treasure, but toil in digging for it, to the certain destruction of their lives. They are like men picking pockets before the magistrate's face ; or committing under the gallows the very crime for which a fellow-creature is perishing on it. "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

We have next another example of Bunyan's insight into the working of the human spirit and the Divine spirit. Immediately after resisting temptation, the pilgrims come to a pleasant river and happy garden of heavenly enjoyment. How true to experience ! When temptation to sin has been resisted, the ransomed spirit

is like the prisoner when "he leaps to lose his chains." The angels came and ministered to Jesus after the temptation.

Here is the Psalmist's "river of God;" Apostle John's "river of life." God is the living God, and the life-giving God. Whatever proceeds from Him is life; and this flows from Him like a river. It is a river of blessing. When one acquiesces in God's will he is on the banks of this river. To drink of the water of the river is simply to be in a state of perfect contentment with the will of God. I enjoy God when I will what He wills; love what He loves; desire what He desires; and do what He commands. God's peace and joy flow to me like a river. In God's garden the leaves are ever green, and the trees bear all manner of fruit. The joys of a submissive will never fade, and they are manifold. Some think that to be religious is to be deprived of the gratification of every natural desire. No. God has given us natural desires, and religion is His appointed way of getting them lawfully gratified. The trees bear all manner of fruits. There is not a single thing calculated to give real joy, which He does not give us. Our compound bodily and spiritual system is but a host of cravings—God has willed it so—and not one of them but will have satisfaction if we seek it in God's way. Sin consists in seeking it in another way than His, in the way of our own ignorance or impatience. It is the delight of God to fulfil the desire of them that fear Him.

But we are not to think that every outward object we seek will be given us. The secret of peace lies in

living for God's pleasure ; and resting assured that what He gives or withholds is best for us. The pilgrims found all manner of fruit on the trees by the river of God. And provision is made not only for unfed wants ; but for wants too well fed. The same trees of God that give fruit for food, give leaves for medicine. Those that travel are liable to particular diseases. On the way of their pilgrimage they have long fastings sometimes ; and sometimes when they can get it, they take more food than they can digest. Sometimes get too much heated ; and are attacked with malignant fevers. There is gold fever, and fame fever ; the intermittent fever of fashion ; the fever of amusements ; and many others, including a type called religious fever, which consists in a burning zeal with insufficient knowledge. A fever means an extreme heat or cold. The leaves of God's trees are a cure for all extremes. They keep one cool, without being cold ; and warm, without being too hot for reasonable work.

God's trees may be regarded as His ordinances. On either side of the river is a meadow, beautified with lilies. The lily a symbol of purity. The pilgrims lay down and slept here in safety. No fear and perfect rest to those that are pure or sincere in heart. Again and again they ate and drank ; and slept in this meadow for several days and nights. The fear of God drives every other fear away. " What man is he that feareth the Lord ? Him shall He teach in the way. His soul shall dwell at ease " (Psa. xxv. 12-13).

In the next stage of experience, we find the river of enjoyment and the path of duty diverging. "The river" and "the way" for a time parted. Not permanently—for a time. The pilgrims were sorry. It is another temptation. On the one hand, they had principle to walk by; on the other, pleasure. It appears that the fear of God kept them right. They durst not go out of the way. And the way was rough, and their feet tender, by long travel. The way from the river was rough. It is always a rough road that leads us away from the agreeable things of life. It is a rough road that leads the mother away from her dead child—the strong man from his health—the business man from his prosperity—the Christian from his joy. But notice, God's way is never apart from the river of life, and the peace that flows from him. Never in reality apart; although we may *feel* as if we were apart. And it is that feeling, or sense of separation, which Bunyan is here referring to. The way from the river, that is, when it pleases God to put us in a path of duty which we do not like; when we leave behind spiritual enjoyments on which we have been gladly feasting. And all the more painful is this experience, if it comes as part of a long previous course of hardship. The pilgrims were now on a rough road—to aggravate their case, their feet were tender. They had had much roughness on the road previously; and they carried the marks of their pain along with them. They had hoped against hope for an end to their troubles. They had come to a green spot in the wilderness. They had hoped to be weary

and heavy-laden no more, to rest from all their labours. But no ; they were soon off the soft green turf ; and, still footsore, treading the rough road that led them from their river of pleasures, garden of lilies, and orchard of fruitful trees. They were much discouraged because of the way.

Often the believer's experience answers to this. He is led through all the sad experience of sorrows and of pains. One trial is scarcely past till another comes ; and another. And when at length there is a respite, he thinks the pain will be felt no more ; the weariness and despondency will cease. But the thought has scarcely time to cross his mind when duty diverges from the soft, pleasant meadow of his inclination ; and he is on the rough road of trial and trouble again. And as if the Lord were angry and would not hear his prayer, he is disposed to cry with the Psalmist, "How long wilt Thou be angry against the prayer of Thy people ?"

BY-PATH MEADOW AND
DOUBTING CASTLE

How natural it was for the pilgrims to wish for what they thought a better way ! Is it wrong to wish for more ease and enjoyment when we are burdened and unhappy in our Christian course ? No, certainly ; but if that wish be stronger than the wish that God may lead us in His own course, it is hazardous and evil. I am afraid the pilgrims' wish here was stronger for their own ease than for God's glory. A small divergence, only a wish, and yet see what it led to ! Of the Israelites in the wilderness it is said, " God gave them their desire, and sent leanness into their soul." They wished some other than God's way,; and soon their wish was gratified. Do not esteem it a mark of Divine favour when you get what you wish ; it is a mark of His favour when you get what *He wishes*. " Not mine, but Thine."

On the left hand of the road they saw a meadow ; and a stile to go over into it. Notice, they must have been looking hither and thither for a way of escape from the rough road. The eye, instead of looking right on, began to look sideways. They walked one

way and looked another. This was like By-ends. It was double-mindedness. If they wished ease to their feet they should rather have hurried on in the way of truth and holiness. But instead of that, they began to linger, and look over the hedge on the left hand. There must have been a hedge or wall, or no stile would have existed there. They saw there was a meadow, a soft, green, grassy place on the other side; and lo! there was a stile inviting them to go over, and making it easy for them. Christian had no intention whatever to depart from the right path; but he wanted to know if that easy meadow lay alongside or parallel with it, and, if so, he saw no reason why they should not go over. They would still be walking in the right direction, and would make a happy change of rough stones for soft, cool grass. So Christian went to the stile to see, and gave in his report. "It is according to my wish; here is the easiest going; come, good Hopeful, let us go over." "Will it not lead us out of the way?" says Hopeful. "Not likely; it goes along by the wayside," replies Christian; and then both went over into By-path Meadow.

We learn to cease from man. The best Christians will lead one another astray, if relied on. The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. This was a left-handed contrivance of the pilgrims to do God's will and their own wishes at the same time. To do God's work in their own most agreeable way. To serve God at as little expense or trouble as possible. They were risking their

souls to save their feet. When you give over a troublesome scholar, because he is troublesome, to another teacher, you are walking in By-path Meadow. If the Lord's work is hard you will get it done for you. If it is hard for you to speak for Christ on any occasion, go over the stile into By-path Meadow, and get another to do it for you. "If you can please yourself, and not go diametrically opposite to God's pleasure, but just as it were alongside of it, do it," says By-ends; and here is By-path Meadow with its soft, green grass to walk on. A little turn to the left hand brings you there; and so small a divergence from the truth is nothing to be accounted of!

And now as regards their experience in the Meadow. They find it very easy. And what is more, they have company. They see a man walking as they did, and are encouraged. They don't know his name; but Bunyan tells us it is Vain-Confidence. Not a very suitable companion, or guide, for so he seems to be to them. However, in their ignorance, they are well pleased with the place and the company. To make sure, they ask whither the way leads—applying to man, rather than God; doubtless half-afraid that God if asked would answer unfavourably to their ease; and are told that it leads to the Celestial Gate. Vain-Confidence told them this; and they, relying on him, are, like him, vainly confident. "Look, did not I tell you, we are right?" says Christian. They follow—not far, till darkness falls; and their guide is lost. It was worse for him, and better for them. Had they not

lost their guide, it would have been their ruin. "By this you may see we are right." Notice Christian's vain-confidence here. By this—by what? By the word of a mere man and a stranger. The man who, like themselves, was walking on the wrong side of the fence, named (but they did not know it) Vain-Confidence, said, "This is the way to the Celestial Gate;" and Christian at once leapt to the unwarrantable conclusion, "By this you may see we are right." What evidence had he that he was right? None, except the talk and walk of a man who was a vainglorious fool. Christian followed Vain-Confidence, who trusted to himself; and Hopeful followed Christian. We learn that we may with safety as little trust in Christ's real followers as in His only professed ones.

The result was—night came; and the darkness grew very dark. That darkness was both a curse and a blessing. It was their folly and sin that brought it on. They had turned from the path of light, and darkness was to be looked for as naturally as burning, if you put your hand into the fire. But God turned the curse into a blessing. So far, that in the darkness they lost Vain-Confidence. They lost sight of him. Had it not been very dark, it had been worse for them. They would still have kept following Vain-Confidence, and would have fallen with him. But in the night dark clouds gathered; they dared not move a step farther. Then rain fell, it thundered and lightened, and the floods rose. "Oh, that I had kept on my way!" says Hopeful. What a change! He that was full of hope,

now on the verge of despair ; and all by simply following a Christian brother, rather than the Word of God directly.

“ Who could have thought that this path should have led us out of the way ? This path, so easy for the feet ; the other, so rough and hard. It did not seem likely to lead astray. It was good-looking and comfortable !” Alas ! it was not God’s way. They were deceived by good appearances. The elder of the two was in the wrong. Age and experience are not to be trusted, any more than any other thing human. They begin to seek the path they had left. Hope leads the way. There is repentance ; and a voice is heard encouraging them. But the worst part of their trial is yet to come. In the darkness plunging, and with floods threatening to overwhelm them, they present a very impressive picture of the evils of backsliding, and of the sorrow of a penitent spirit before it finds peace. In a little they find peace of a kind—repose—sleep—on forbidden ground ; and such sleep has always a sad awakening. Despair is early awake, and walking in his grounds. By-path Meadow belongs to him. They still hold their religious profession ; when the Giant lays hold on them, they declare they are pilgrims. They are awakened by him, from their unsafe sleep.

There are some without hope, and dead to their condition. These are hopeless, and alive to it. Hence their misery. When one is stunned by a fall, he feels no pain until he is beginning to recover. The pilgrims were seeking to go back when Despair overtook them,

and they were cast into the dungeon of Doubting Castle. Doubts rise from various causes, and are of various kinds. Sometimes transgression, sometimes great afflictions. Doubts of God's mercy, or of His existence. Then come the Giant's consultations with his wife, Diffidence, which means want of faith. This and despair are inseparably united. She counsels to give no mercy. She is unwomanly and cruel. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. The pilgrims doubt God's mercy. Next, her advice is to induce them to make away with themselves. Neither plan succeeded. And when Despair was about to slay them himself, the light of heaven fell on him, and he was paralysed in one of his hands. He had sunstroke. God's light does not agree with hopelessness.

Poor Christian is almost giving himself up to the Giant's wishes ; but Hopeful is not—as you would expect—so easily overcome. Hopeful advises patience ; and reminds his brother that others have been in a similar case, and have been delivered. “ The Giant is subject to fits,” he says, “ and may we not escape during one of these ?” The flax is only smoking ; the reed is bruised, but not broken. Despair tries to convince them it had been better for them never to have been born. Hopeful's first argument was—think what God has done for others. Now it is—think what God has done for you in the past. Apollyon—Shadow of Death—Vanity Fair. And again he preaches patience, a little more patience. But Despair will not be behind with arguments either. “ See what God has done,”

says Hopeful. "See what I have done," Despair says next morning in reply. "They live in hope," says his wife to Despair. "Perhaps they have picklocks about them." Next morning he will see. This is Saturday evening. With the advent of the Sabbath deliverance comes to the pilgrims. They find rest. They have picklocks, which they have forgotten to use.

The means of their deliverance—prayer, and perseverance in it. It brings God's Word to remembrance—the word is in Christian's bosom—one does not need to be Hopeful to have it ; Christian, because he is such, has it, and will find it by a little reflection. Christ is formed in him, the hope of glory—as it were asleep, as He once was in the boat—no sooner do they awake Him, than He puts an end to their troubles, and chides their unbelief. Here comes in some word of promise, and God's Word may be said to be all promise. Every warning, rebuke, threat, has gospel in the heart of it. This key opens every lock (every doubt) in Doubting Castle. Christian is sure it will. He has a promise, and faith also to use it. "I am persuaded," he says. No particular word, for each case has its own. "Try," says Hopeful. The various gates and locks are various doubts and fears. The key opens all ; though some are harder to unlock than others. At the last gate their enemy is aroused to make a final effort on their life ; but the light of the Sabbath morning is too strong for him ; he falls into one of his fits, and their escape is complete.

Saved, they are most anxious to save others from the same sad experience, and erect a pillar at the spot where they left the way. This was indeed turning their sin to good account. They were ashamed of it before God. But not ashamed to confess it, even before men, for a warning to them. In this way the Christian makes even Satan do service to his Master. Takes his very sins, and uses them as instruments of righteousness. Back into the way, they don't go far till they come to the Delectable Mountains. Before going aside, had they just held on a little, they would have got here all they wished to get by crossing the stile. Everything to refresh and cheer them. Now in a genial climate ; and high up on safe ground. Gardens—orchards—vineyards—fountains. God's ordinances. "Leaning on their staves"—resting on the promises. They meet good company. Shepherds feeding their flocks ; these who have given themselves to the work of the ministry. Taking care of the sheep for whom the Lord laid down His life.

XXIII

THE SHEPHERDS OF THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS

The shepherds say that that district is Emmanuel's Land, and the Celestial City is visible from it. Sometimes, in exalted frame, and in the use of God's ordinances, His people have foresights and foretastes of heaven. Christian asks how far the City? It is not for them to tell, nor for him to know. His business is to get there. The answer given is good. Again, he asks if the way is safe or dangerous? His business is to walk in it. The answer again is good—transgressors fall therein. Then the Shepherds put a few plain experimental questions to them; and, pleased with their answers, bid them welcome. The Shepherds make this sad statement that few who set out ever shew their face on these mountains. Many walk in the low lands, who are free to roam, if they choose, on the mountains. Many are led out of the way to the mountains. The Shepherds are four: Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, Sincere. Good company. They take the pilgrims by the hand to their tents. Happy they who dwell in such tents as these: happy the Shepherds, too, whose names are such as these. We learn here that one to guide others aright in the Christian course must first know the truth; second, test the truth; third, be wide-

awake, or on the look out, lest he lose or misapply it ; fourth, be loyal to it. The pilgrims, after a night's rest, take a morning walk, and have a pleasant prospect on every side. They are at one with God's will, and in their eyes all things are fair and good. Not only pleased but instructed. They receive four lessons. Each of the Shepherds evidently gives one. Knowledge, one in regard to Error. Experience, one in regard to Caution. Watchful, in regard to hell traps in the way. Sincere, in the use of the Celestial telescope. "Avoid Error," says Knowledge. "Avoid the least transgression," says Experience. "Beware of by-ways to hell," says Watchful. "Look through my glass," says Sincere, "and you will see the gate of your celestial home."

The Shepherds all unite to give the pilgrims these four lessons, teaching us that they are all needed : Sincere needs Watchful ; and Watchful Experience ; and Experience Knowledge.

I. The pilgrims are led by Knowledge to a hill called Error, precipitous on the furthest side, at the foot of which lie some dead and unburied, who have aimed at things too high for them, and been lost. They had given an ear to protane and vain babblings.

II. Next, they are led by Experience to the top of Caution, another hill ; and afar off they see men stumbling hopelessly amongst the tombs. These are they who, in spite of experience, have incautiously sought ease on forbidden ground ; and lost their eyesight in Doubting Castle. Christian and Hopeful weep in silent penitence at this sight.

III. Next, led by Watchful to a side door in another hill named Deceit, opening which they find the place full of smoke, and noise of fire, and smell of brimstone. It is the hypocrite's by-way to hell. Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. Esau, Judas, Alexander, Ananias, etc., entered there, and suchlike, some of whom went long in the way of professors.

IV. Next, before going on their way, led by Sincere, the pilgrims are taken to another hill called Clear, and get a look through the telescope of the Shepherds. They are agitated a little, and don't see so well as they might, but yet they enjoy a view of some of the glory of the Celestial City. Their glass is a pure heart. They shall see God who are sincere. All else without this will not do. The four Shepherds at parting give the pilgrims what they best can : from Knowledge, a note of the way ; from Experience, they get a caution against the flatterer ; from Watchful, not to sleep where they would be most tempted to do so ; Sincere bids them Godspeed, *i.e.*, that they may go Godward with speed, or make progress by God's grace, for God's sake, and unto God's presence. Notice the appropriateness of this last. Granted Sincerity, there will be good speed made in the way of life. The greatest possible hindrance is want of this. A sincere desire simply to please God, this is the main thing needed. With this, everything else is secured. Young persons especially find it hard to be thus sincere, when vanity, pride, selfishness, come in to tempt them. They yield, and the good which they were almost in reach of is lost.

There are three new characters now introduced : Ignorance, Turn-away, Little-faith. The pilgrims go down the mountains of Delectation ; but still keep the highway. On the left hand, off the way a bit, lies Conceit, from which comes a little crooked lane to join God's highway. At this point they meet Ignorance, a very brisk lad, who has just come along the lane from Conceit, and is going, he says, to the Celestial City. Notice—Conceit breeds Ignorance. One who thinks highly of himself will not learn much from the word of either God or man. Young men and young women usually get part of their education in Conceit. Knowledge gives a chart—"No, thank you ; I don't need it." So with Experience, Watchful, and Sincere. We are all ignorant enough ; but not all, I hope, wilfully ignorant through self-conceit.

The crooked way represents the shifts which a conceited person makes to conceal his ignorance ; or get repute for knowledge which he does not possess. He zig-zags from one thing to another, turns one corner, and then another, to keep his reputation right with men ; perhaps, at the same time, in a subordinate way, trying to keep it right with God too. Serving two masters. Ignorance is well pleased with the crooked lane ; it is, he says, a fine, pleasant, green lane. It is pleasant to gratify self-conceit ; and Ignorance would rather take a longer road to do that, than the direct road of pleasing God. Self-pleasing is pleasant ; but it is self-ruining. Ignorance is a very brisk lad—young, and full of animation. Ready for anything you please

in religion ; no lack of self-assurance. Brisk—shallow ; without seriousness ; and without inclination or power of thinking.

He at once declares where he is bound for, and expresses a firm assurance of getting in at heaven's gate, as other good people do. " I know my Lord's will," and so on. " But you did not come in at the wicket gate," says Christian. " It was too far off our country." Conceit is a long way from Christ. Ignorance says he took the nearest and pleasantest way, and he does not seem to be disposed to be reasoned with. " You follow the religion of your country," he says to Christian, " and I will follow mine." Accordingly Christian and Hopeful agree to let him alone in the meantime, and will try by degrees to do him good.

Many professing Christians of this stamp are brisk, and well instructed, and wise in their own conceits. But yet ignorant of Christ—feel no need of Him ; and therefore don't lean on Him, but depend on outward forms, on harmless lives, on good intentions. They have had no conversion ; no sense of sin. There is a time to speak to such ; and a time to let them alone. Let us seek more and more to know experimentally the truth as it is in Jesus, and in His Word. The sons of Ignorance know not what it is to be " born again ;" to be made a " new creature." A scriptural illustration of what " brisk " means—" Lord, Lord, have we not in Thy Name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works ?" " I never knew you, ye that work iniquity !"

Turn-away is the next character. As Christian and Hopeful go on, they enter a very dark lane ; not crooked this time ; a time of trial when religion has no attractions. Then once flourishing professors are seen to draw back. When they suffer for their religion, they grow impatient, and throw it off, and seek relief in worldliness. In this dark lane, they see a man whom seven devils have bound with their seven cords, and are carrying to the by-way to perdition. It is an appalling sight to Christian and his companion. The man hid his face like a detected thief ; but Hopeful discovers his true name and character plainly marked on his back. He is one Turn-away, from Apostasy. His face tells, or once did, one story, and his back another. His profession was good ; but his life, if it did shew good fruit, had no root to give the fruit permanence. In the time of trial, in the dark lane, this man gave way, and became sevenfold worse than if he had never professed religion at all.

Sometimes a man will have conviction of the truth brought home to him, and will be reclaimed from some evil habit by it. So far good ; but he does not hold by his convictions, and allow them full scope and free course in his heart and life. He violates them, and then they leave him ; and bad habits far worse than his old iniquities lay hold on him. The one devil cast out returns to the house with seven worse than himself. Let us not be content to mix with good people, and learn the language of piety, and observe God's ordinances. But mainly seek more and more

of vital union with Christ at heart, and apostasy will be impossible.

We come now to Little-faith ; a good man ; but no stamina in his goodness. He chanced to sit down and sleep, near Dead-man's Lane, that comes down from Broadway Gate. A dangerous place to sleep in, where there is an easy inroad from the world. The world's principles get a way, here and there, into the church, down Dead-man's lane. The church, in so far as it seeks success for its own sake or wealth, or rank, or position, is influenced by worldly principles.

So a private Christian, like Little-faith, will be tempted by the influence of surrounding worldliness to grow careless. He needs rousing to resist the world ; or the world will come down on him with its cares, riches, pleasures, like a gang of robbers, to vex and abuse him. All things are lawful, but not all expedient. The risk of Little-faith is, that he may conform more to carnal policy than is consistent with his spiritual safety. What a sad case. The faith is little, and that little faint. Little-faith grows faint at heart ; then he mistrusts ; then he sinks down under a sin-laden conscience. It was little faith, unconscious of its weakness, when Apostle Peter presumed to walk in the sea ; it was little faith when the disciples, with Jesus in the boat beside them, felt fearstricken and helpless during the storm. By contrast, witness the Syrophenician woman, pleading for her child ; and the Roman centurion, who entreated, in so assured and so beautiful a way, for his dying slave.

As you would expect, Little-faith came to trouble in the dark lane. And, while he slept there, was attacked by three robbers—Faint-heart, Mis-trust, Guilt (three brothers), who came down from Broad-way Gate. In threefold way, they represent men who habitually think everything is against them ; those who trust in what is as weak as themselves ; and those who carry guilt burdened consciences along with them unrelieved.

Little-faith is fond of money. Faint-heart demands it ; Mis-trust takes it away ; and Guilt, with one blow, lays him bleeding in the dust. We have here a Christian who is afraid of losing his temporal means ; he entrusts it to some human surety and it fails ; and then his means gone, a guilty conscience visits him with a fearful recompense. However, the robbers are put to flight by what they think the footfall of Great-grace ; and the poor man scrambles on his way. If even the sound of his footfall can put these rogues to flight, what good confidence may we not have when we keep Great-grace personally in our company ! The pilgrims talk over this accident that befel Little-faith. His jewels were safe, and his certificate. What were his jewels ? These : the graces of heart by Christ's spirit inwrought ; and his trust in Christ's righteousness. The poor man's talk after this was mainly about his temporal loss—where—how—who—what, etc. The same thought bestowed on the jewels would have given him all the comfort he needed. The jewels are not saleable ; and, besides, nobody would buy them in the market of the world. The man's faith, though little, was real.

XXIV

THE FLATTERER'S NET AND THE ENCHANTED GROUND

The pilgrims learn from their recent experience (i.) to go harnessed for attack, and to take above all the shield of faith ; (ii.) to make earnest appeal for a convoy of the king ; and especially that Himself may go with them. " If Thy Presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." Christian and Hopeful as they proceed are caught unawares in a net. It means that they are in great perplexity, and can find no way out of it. The more they try to get out, the more they get entangled. This is sometimes a Christian's condition. He falls into some error ; and by that error is led into a maze of difficulties, from which he struggles in vain to get free. And cries out as Job did, " O, that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me ; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness !" One is so apt to think if he falls into the net that God has made it for him. But Christian and Hopeful find no net in God's way. They were in the way of transgressors when they fell into it. And it was good that they were held in the net, for it prevented them from going farther

astray. There is no evil that is not in some respects a blessing. The net was not of God's making, but God used it to hinder His children from going too far away from Him.

Let us see how the pilgrims went astray here. We are told, they went on, and Ignorance followed. I wonder if they sometimes cast a look of reproach back on the poor, brisk lad, and congratulated themselves on their superior knowledge. We are so apt to blame, pity, or pray for our fellow-creatures, and lo ! at the next step it is discovered that we are ourselves more to be blamed, or commiserated than they. We find Christian and Hopeful here forsaking knowledge, and walking in the way of their own ignorant fancy. They went on, and came shortly to a place where the way broke up into two, and both ways seemed equally straight. One good feature in the pilgrims is that they were desirous of keeping in the straight road. Both ways seemed equally straight, and they stood still to consider.

The Shepherd named Knowledge gave them a note of the way ; they actually have that note in their possession. It is the Divine Word, a lamp to their feet, and light to their path ; but they don't use it, and try to settle the difficulty without it. Whilst standing in doubt, it is not long till help comes, such as it is. If we don't use God's ordained outward help, we shall soon get help of another sort than His. Presently, and to all appearance, an angel of light comes ; and asks why they stand there. He is really a black man, or worthless character, but they don't know it. His dress covers

him, and his dress is white, glistening white ; the opposite of his own colour under it. His profession is remarkably good ; but it happens to be just the reverse of his real character. This is the man whom Christian and Hopeful now trust in to guide them. Instead of following Christ, they follow this distinguished Christian. They felt no doubt that this resplendent being, so good and holy, could not possibly lead them astray. Yet they might have suspected that one who could say—Follow me, to his fellow-creatures, must be very far wrong himself. If a man says to me—Follow Christ, and has ability and skill to shew me what Christ is, I may safely trust him. But he who says—Follow me, is doing a thing which I can hardly believe a true Christian and honest man would do.

“We all like sheep have gone astray.” When one sheep goes through the fence, it calls out “follow-me,” and the rest run after it. Not till we get to heaven shall we discover what heaps of nonsense we have received for God’s truth on earth here below. Christians are apt to follow each other too much—to do and say this or that because some other approved Christian has said or done it. The best thing is for each to get his orders from the Master Himself ; to do his own work, in his own sphere, and in his own way. If the living stones were not dispersed, and cut after different shapes there could be no beautiful temple reared with them. The straight path for my neighbour Christian may be (to a great extent must be), a very crooked path for me.

Gradually the pilgrims were led round and round until, and in a little time too, they found their faces turned away from the city they wished to go to. Yet, we are told, the fascination of this black man of white appearance was so great that they still followed him. Then, suddenly, the charm is gone, their feet are in the net, their white-robed guide is disclosed in all his native blackness, and it would appear forsakes them in the time of their perplexity and distress. However, it is a happy riddance when he deprives them of his evil company ; and it is a blessed net that keeps their feet from straying further.

It is a sad thought, but undeniable, that if we follow even the best of men, we shall gradually have our eyes withdrawn from God. "Looking unto Jesus," who alone can truthfully say, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life." Then they saw where they were. Convinced of their error ; but what to do, how to get out they knew not. Let us hear their penitent confessions. They recollect the warning of the Shepherds to beware of the flatterer. Each blames himself ; a true work of grace ; it is not a good sign when one professing penitence casts the blame of his past sin or unbelief on the inconsistencies of professing Christians. They remember the note of directions which they have not used. Let us see how deliverance came. In answer to the wail of their penitence, a true angel of light comes with a scourge. He hears their story ; tells them it is a flatterer, or false apostle, that has led them astray ; then breaking the net he sets them free, and leads them back to the

right way. He gives them first a proof of his power through means of the scourge, before he asks them to follow him. Then he subjects them to a most searching examination, to bring out the whole truth of the matter. They are thoroughly humbled, and sorely chastened. This, you notice, they call his kindness ; and thanking him for it they go softly down the right way, and the soreness of the discipline does not keep them from singing.

The Flatterer here means chiefly one who gives a better impression of his character than it deserves. Not so much one who seeks to please your vanity. That doubtless is in it too. He is a fine spoken man. Any one who asks you to do as he does is a Flatterer. The true apostle turns your eye and steps to Christ. Beware of showy appearances in religion. What is truest and richest at heart is least tempted to make a display.

Not long after they are tempted to become atheists. Not only to disbelieve God's Word, but to disbelieve in any god at all. In regard to this point it was, that their faith was now tried. Do not think you are not Christians if such a temptation should ever try you. You see it trying the pilgrims here. I was seven or eight years a Christian before I experienced it. It comes as a passing mood of the highly spiritual mind, resulting from prayers supposed to be unanswered ; and from faithful work supposed to be of God neglected and unblessed. They see a man coming with his back toward Zion, or toward God. This is the atheist's position. There are many practical atheists—Obstinate and Pliable, *e.g.*—who are really in a similar position,

though professedly otherwise. Many who have their backs to Zion and God would be highly offended if you did not esteem them eminent Christians. But this man scorns the name of Christian. There is no God, he says ; and no heaven. No future state. He laughs at their ignorance and folly, in troubling themselves so much for nothing. He speaks as a man of experience too. I have tried religion, and found nothing in it. It is all a delusion. I have had faith, and it has led me farther than you. But it has resulted in nothing but disappointment. I am now going to take all the good the present world affords, before I leave it.

This man in his religion might be, though not necessarily, a formalist or hypocrite. If so, no wonder he got soon tired of it. But he no more knew what it was than a blind man can know colour. He says he has taken the cup of salvation, and found it empty. The pilgrims are tempted, but yield not. They part from Atheist, who laughs at them, and goes his way. They have a witness in themselves. There is no arguing against experience.

The Enchanted Ground next comes in view, a place and time of no special trials ; and of much prosperity. When unexpectedly worldly affairs prosper, and give no anxiety. No cross, no reproach in religion. When our friends and acquaintance are kind and moral ; but not spiritually minded. We are then in danger of being lulled to sleep, and make no progress. To talk of spiritual experience keeps off drowsiness. Hopeful relates his

experience. Born in Vanity Fair, and pleased with it. Convinced of sin by Christian and Faithful. Tried to shake off conviction : four reasons for doing so. But there were twice as many reasons that brought the conviction back afresh. Tried self-righteousness, but failed. Came in anxiety to Faithful, who shewed him Christ, the righteous One. How he was taught to pray. His perseverance and waiting. Rewarded at length with a spiritual vision of Christ, as his own personal Saviour.

We have an interview with Ignorance again. His character is here more thoroughly examined and brought out. We are all profoundly ignorant. Know little of God and of ourselves ! But this man is wilfully ignorant. His ignorance is the offspring of self-conceit and self-righteousness. And consequently, thinking himself so good and wise, he makes very little use of the means of Divine grace and instruction within his reach. He is called a youngster here ; formerly, a brisk lad. The young, especially, are prone to be wise in their own conceit. It is a dangerous period for a young man or woman when he feels it incumbent on him to correct his parents. A young girl who at present tosses her head magnificently, and casts her mother's counsel to the winds, will confess with a sad heart, and perhaps with dripping eyes, when twelve or twenty years have passed over her head, that in her girlhood no one ever got better advice from a parent than she, or ever cast it more foolishly away.

The first unfavourable feature in the character of Ignorance here is that he does not like the company of

Christian and Hopeful. Sometimes Christians are not very likeable, especially if they wear the hanging head and rueful or supercilious look, and make their religion taste like vinegar to those who do not know it. If one does not care for the company of such, it is no proof that he does not love Christ, or walk with Christ ; it may be, on the other hand, an evidence that his view of Christ is unusually clear, and his love to Christ unusually warm. But if you have such good Christians as our two pilgrims, it is no good sign, if one finds their company so disagreeable that he cannot walk together with them. This is the case with Ignorance. They resume conversation with him. At once another unfavourable feature comes out. He tells them that his comforts come from his own heart—he has good motives there that are his comfort by the way. He is pleased with his thoughts of God and heaven ; and with his desires after them. He says he has left all for them. “ How do you know ? ” says Christian. “ My heart tells me ; and mine is a good one.” Truly none but Ignorance and his family could speak in a way like this. And when Christian tells him that his thoughts respecting his heart and life cannot be true and good unless in harmony with the Word of God, which declares every man’s heart to be only evil and that continually, he replies, “ I will never believe that my heart is thus bad.” Ignorance gives a confession of his faith ; and says he believes in Christ for justification ; but then the justification he means is not that which a poor, needy, helpless sinner needs ; but such as the Pharisee

who prayed in the Temple thought himself entitled to. Ignorance says—I believe I shall be justified before God through His gracious acceptance of my obedience to His law ; Christ, by virtue of His merits, offers my obedience, it is therefore accepted of the Father, and so I am justified.

It is just as if one should write out his good virtues of heart and life in a letter, with the view of presenting it to the supreme Judge, and think it justification simply to get Christ to offer it. Regarding Christ as a kind of decent postman, or carrier of our goodness before God—one whose services, by some obscure arrangement of Divine grace, could not be dispensed with. What a different view of Christ one has who has been brought out of ignorance in regard to the depth and extent of his sin, and the righteousness and holiness of God !

Christian, by his argument, tears up this confession of Ignorance's faith to rags. First, it is a faith only in your fancy, not in God's Word. Second, it is a faith not in Christ's personal righteousness, but in your own. Third, it is faith in Christ as a justifier not of your person, but of your actions. Fourth, it is a self-righteous faith, and therefore deceitful and worthless. But, replies Ignorance in astonishment, you would not have us trust only to what Christ does without us, for then we would live in every sinful indulgence just as we pleased.

THE LAND OF BEULAH AND THE RIVER OF DEATH

This Ignorance of Bunyan is not easily detected ; or easily put to the blush. Everything he says has a shade of truth in it. Every bad feature in his character has a good aspect seen from a certain point of view. However, the ignorance, though very subtle, may be detected by the position in which we place Christ in our faith, as our Righteousness Himself, and not the mere bearer of it. The two pilgrims then talk over such characters. They are very numerous. Even pilgrims too. Many in Vanity Fair. How many more in the country of Conceit ! Have they ever convictions of sin ? Yes, sometimes, which they try to stifle. They don't see in it the work of God.

The pilgrims enter a new territory, a more pleasant land than they have ever yet enjoyed. They have been travelling on Enchanted Ground, a region where it is not easy to keep awake, and most dangerous to fall asleep. That unsafe ground is now past, and they are entered on a country where there are unspeakable pleasures to be enjoyed, and no evil enchantment to make these pleasures unsafe. They are now in the land

of Beulah, which represents a state of great spiritual peace and prosperity, wherein there is scarce anything which heart can desire, that is not in some degree enjoyed. It is not meant that the temporal peace and prosperity have gone ; but that they have been so superseded by corresponding spiritual things as to be forgotten, or as it were left behind, or left out of view. Beulah means married. This country is married to the Highest. It is, as it were, His Bride ; and she can say to Him, All Thine are mine and mine are Thine. It is a country, therefore, loaded with the gifts of the Saviour's love. Because married to Him, it possesses Him, and all that is His. The bond is there, deep, and unbreakable. It is a happy land. It has particularly those joys which may be called wedding joys. Not the deep, solid, settled, well understood satisfaction of advanced married life ; but the young ecstasy of newly wedded life, too full of surprise to be as yet well understood.

In Beulah the sun never sets, consequently birds are for ever singing, and flowers for ever blooming. No clouds ever cast shadow on the ground. No shadow of Death falls on it ; no Giant Despair treads the blessed soil, nor Doubting Castle rears its frowning head, in all the happy land. In this country you have all the joys which the new made Bride has in her faithful Husband. Far from doubt, farther from despair ; still farther from the Valley of the Shadow of Death. The pilgrims here see, and not far off, the city they are going to ; nay, they hear loud voices of good cheer coming from

it; nay, more, they have beside them some of that city's shining inhabitants. This land touches heaven, and heaven touches it. It represents a state of pure heavenly-mindedness. In which the soul forgets almost that it has any sin, or is still existing in an evil world. Heavenly things absorb it. If it has no depressing sense of sin, it is because it has an overpowering sense of the Saviour's all-willingness and all-sufficiency, and of the joy unspeakable and full of glory that His precious blood has purchased.

The soul takes Christ's word, as the Bride takes the Bridegroom's when at the wedding he says, "I will." There is no doubt; there is all the joy of a sevenfold assured confidence. There is a sense of nearness to Christ, and to the happy place where He dwells. This experience may be had when one is not near death. The beauty of the City is more than the pilgrims can well endure. The glory is too great for their yet unglorified bodily senses. Christians have sometimes felt heart and flesh sink down oppressed under the weight of glory which was revealed to them of heavenly things, in their pious meditations.

"Jerusalem the golden,
With milk and honey blest;
Beneath thy contemplation
Sink heart and voice opprest."

As they draw nearer on the highway doors open to orchards, and the Gardener, standing in the way, takes them in and entertains them, and they sleep there. And talk in their sleep as they never did before.

Even in their most inactive moments their lips are ready to talk abundantly of God's goodness. Shews the fulness of their hearts. The spontaneity of their spiritual talk. A strong figurative way of expressing the sweetness and power of God's ordinances to a heavenly-minded person. Setting out, they view the city through a glass, for it is too glorious for the naked eye. And two angels meet them, who tell them they have but two difficulties to meet before entering the city. God gives His people everything they need. Each has an angel, and there is an angel to tell of each difficulty, and not only so, but to help in and through it.

The pilgrims come in sight of heaven's gate, the entrance to their eternal rest. They have not yet reached it; but they see it. There is a Gate between them and their rest, and there is a river between them and the Gate. Two difficulties to overcome, as the heavenly messengers told them. We are told that two men met them in Beulah, in golden raiment and with faces as bright as the light. Coming from the City of light and gold, they bring its light and beauty on them. They are pledges of God's truth. They serve as an assurance to each pilgrim that the City of rest which they have long been seeking, is no fiction, and is near at hand. God sends His angels, perhaps redeemed men, to minister to us. They bring heavenly light and beauty with them. Or Bunyan's idea may have been this, that every ray of light and comfort that comes down to us from God is like a celestial visitant, reminding us—as these two did the pilgrims—what help God has given

in the past, and disclosing the remaining trials of the way, and the glorious rest beyond.

The pilgrims come in sight of the Gate. They have seen the City before this. It shows they are much nearer now when they see the Gate. And they see it through an instrument made for the purpose, we are told, because the glory was greater than their senses could bear. What does that instrument mean? Language is like a glass through which we see God's truth; and particularly, figurative language is a glass through which we see God's city, the new Jerusalem. We are not yet capable of apprehending the unveiled reality of heavenly things; and the best that can be done for us at present is to take the highest glory of an earthly city, the very brightest that can be imagined, and use that as a sort of veil or glass, through which the heavenly may be seen in such diminished splendour as our weak eyes can bear. We are not to look *at* the gold and precious stones, but through them to spiritual realities which they are taken fitly to represent. There is one reality under heaven which the pilgrims have hitherto seen as through a glass; but now face to face. Death is near, at their feet, an open unveiled reality before their eyes. Not the shadow—the substance. They realise its presence. They stand in awe before it. It is an awful moment when one feels convinced that he is just going to die. Awful, if he has not the Gate in view; if it is all darkness beyond. He has come to the edge of his earthly existence; he must drop, drop now, where he cannot tell. It is not thus hopelessly the pilgrims meet

death. They can see clearly beyond it, and they realise some company from the unseen world beyond. Each has a Christ with him, to whom he can say, "I fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

Nevertheless, it is a severe trial to both, and especially to one, whose temperament, probably, is less hopeful than that of the other. Death is represented as a river. The Gate is between them and the City; the river between them and the Gate. An unbridged river, and very deep. No way over death without feeling it; you must pass through. Well named the Jordan, because it separates a weary wilderness from a land of promise, flowing with milk and honey. Yet Christian and even Hopeful are stunned at the sight of this river. Though they have so much in their eye beyond it. They would like to be translated as Enoch and Elijah were. But the Son of Man beside them says, "No; just as the City is not yours except through the Gate; so the Gate is not yours except through the river. You must go through." This, it appears, the pilgrims were not altogether resigned to at first. They looked this way and that. Perhaps the Lord had forgotten some easier way of entrance to the better land. They fell into despondency. It is evident their faith was wavering a little, for on asking anxiously about the depth of the water, the two ministering spirits said, to encourage faith, "You will find it deeper or shallower as you trust the King."

God never intended us to like death. Nature revolts from it. However strong the Christian's faith may be,

he cannot but feel some shrinking more or less from the process by which the soul is separated from the body. But far more of the revulsion rises from unbelief than from nature. It is the after death that strikes the unbelieving soul with terror, and not so much the event itself. Not so here. Bunyan does not seem to take any account here of nature's regret at parting with friends. It is the pure spirit engaged inwardly with its hopes, and fears, and prospects that he is representing. Christian and Hopeful are on the brink. Now they are in the river itself. We are not to think that two persons can in this way die together. We must die, one by one, and alone. No friend, however near bodily, can reach the spirit, where it struggles in the stream. Indeed, it is only when left alone, when physician and every human help fails, that we begin to die. What is here represented is the struggle between hope and fear in the dying Christian. Not that it is always exactly so ; but in general it is something like this picture. We look at it truly then when we regard Christian as the dying man, and Hopeful representing that Christian virtue which never leaves a believer, though it may not always be realised, or be equally serviceable ; Divine Hope which is an anchor of the soul sure and stedfast, and entering into that which is within the veil. How touching the picture !

The sinking Christian cries to Hopeful, who cheers him with the thought that the bottom is good. You may fail, God's Word, never. Doubts and darkness come on poor Christian, his memory fails, his senses,

his tongue—it is so strange and bewildering an experience. Sometimes he thinks he will never reach the Gate—sins old and new crowd in on his mind ; evil spirits too, come and trouble him. “ We are saved by Hope.” Hopeful keeps his head above the water ; but it takes all his strength to do so sometimes. Christian finds it difficult to make personal application of the promises which Hopeful gives him, of the good things awaiting them on the other side. “ It’s for you, not me. He has left me to this distress for my sins.” Nay, says Hopeful, this distress only proves that God is trying you, if you will remember His past goodness, and trust Him still. Then Christian recovers courage, feels the ground firm, gets into shallow water, and reaches the safe shore, where the two men meet them, and embrace them, and begin to conduct them towards the Gate.

After passing the river the pilgrim’s progress is not yet at an end. They have yet to journey on some distance to the city of their everlasting rest. At death (in Bunyan’s view) we are not immediately perfected. There is an intermediate state between death and the judgment, in which the spirits of the redeemed are perfectly safe, holy, and happy ; but not yet united to their resurrection bodies. They are incomplete. They are not yet so Christ-like as they are intended to be when like Him—glorified body and soul are united. Death is the time when the soul is unclothed of its mortality ; the resurrection is the time when it is clothed upon with immortality. These two periods

Bunyan seems to represent by the river, and the Gate of the City. We have the pilgrims now between these two stages of their progress. The gate in Scripture represents the place of judgment. Bunyan takes it in that sense. The judges used to sit in the gate. The judgment day, or resurrection day, he represents by the Gate of the Celestial City. When that is passed, the City is entered, or the completed state of the believer's rest and fellowship with the Saviour and His people is begun.

Let us see what the pilgrims are represented as experiencing after death. The City is on a mighty hill ; but they mount with ease, because they are helped by their two companions, and are now free from the hindrances caused by their mortal bodies. The foundation of the City is said to be higher than the clouds. So much above any earthly city ; so high above what they had ever imagined, is the happiness which they have now in prospect, and are certain of possessing. It is as easy for them to mount up now as it is for birds to fly. These are they that have fallen asleep in Jesus. But not an inactive sleep—asleep as it were to us ; but far more active than ever, and making such rapid progress in Divine knowledge as they never made or imagined before. Hear how they talk in their sleep.

They talk with God's angels. They have good society. They hear glowing accounts of the happiness before them. The tree of life, and never-fading fruits. White robes, resurrection bodies, like Christ's, without hindrance to the spirit, but only a helpmeet for it. No

more sorrow, pain, sickness, affliction, death. They are to enjoy the society of redeemed patriarchs and prophets, which is better than that of angels. You will know and "enjoy your friends again." And there will be particular friendships formed there as here.

XXVI

THE WELCOME TO THE HEAVENLY CITY

The pilgrims are accompanied in their progress to the City with every mark of welcome. They are like kings returning home after victory over their enemies. Everything usually thought to grace a triumphal entry is here brought in. Hosts gather round them, by looks and gestures and shoutings testifying their gladness at the pilgrims' arrival. Trumpeters fill the air with music. It seems as if the whole city itself had rushed out with impatient jubilations to welcome them. Notice how they are described by their two guides to the others. They have loved the Lord, and left all for His sake. They are pilgrims of Love, and love's sacrifice, and cherish love's hope and reward to look their Redeemer in the face with joy.

The Gate is reached at last. The last trial. The last judgment. The inscription on the Gate : Blessed are they which are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb !" There entereth nothing that defileth ; no sin. Not like the wicket gate, whereat there entereth nothing but what is vile. The pilgrims have no sense of sin now, because they HAVE no sin. They call for

admission at the Gate. Enoch, Moses, Elijah appear above the Gate. Representative men—men who are in the City in a sense in which are none others—not even Abraham. They have glorified bodies like Christ ; to whom it is declared that love has brought the pilgrims from the City of Destruction, to this City of the King.

Notice, each before entering has to present a certificate. Not what he *is*, but what he *has*. The certificate is the King's own gift, His handwriting, a roll, and what is the writing ? It is His testimony concerning His Son's death on the Cross. The pilgrims have that testimony in their hearts. They trust in it ; nothing else. They are pure ; but it is not in their purity they trust for acceptance in the judgment ; but to the blood of Christ—it was at the Cross the certificate was given. When Christian realised the benefit of the Cross he then and for ever grasped firmly God's promise of heaven, through faith in the blood of Christ.

“Not in mine innocence I trust ;
I bow before Thee in the dust ;
And through my Saviour's blood alone,
I look for mercy at the throne.”

He was told to hold that witness firmly until the promise was fulfilled. He was to give the Certificate in at the Gate. It was God's own Certificate ; what God had written or said. And hence it is represented as being taken in to be examined by the King ; He recognises His own handwriting and commands the gate to be

opened. "That the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in."

On entering they are changed, and clothed upon with what Paul calls their immortal house. Notice, they are now fit for wearing crowns, and for playing harps. That is, they can praise God now in a way they never could before ; and are now honoured more than they were ever before capable of. The dreamer looks in, with a strong desire to be one of their company. "And after that, they shut up the gates ; which, when I had seen, I wished myself amongst them."

The dreamer notices also the fate of Ignorance. He gets over the river with very little difficulty by the help of Vain-hope, a ferryman. He came up to the Gate alone, God was not with him. Looked up to the writing, and was pleased to think he was one of those who did the Lord's will, and had a right to the Tree of Life. He says so, expresses his vain hope to the watchman at the gate, and when they ask him for his certificate he has none to give, except what he has done, or the religious privileges he has enjoyed. "I have eat and drunk in the presence of the King ; and He has taught in our streets."

He has no certificate—no faith in God's testimony regarding His Son, and therefore no admittance to the City. The same angels that led Christian and Hopeful to the city, lead Ignorance away from it to his own place. The by-way to hell into which he is cast is on the Delectable Mountains, shewing that the very things which under God are fitted to give us greatest happiness,

if abused, are the chief causes of our misery. "Then I saw that there was a way to hell from the gates of heaven, as well as from the City of Destruction! So I awoke, and behold it was a dream."

